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"THAT THEY MAY BE ONE."—*John* xvii. 11.

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THE NEW YEAR.

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR!" Familiar but very pleasant words. We all like them. Each is welcome. Take them one by one, and examine them. "Happy." Everybody wishes for happiness. Good, bad, and indifferent want to be blessed. "Who will show us any good?" is the universal cry. More than that: God desires our happiness. It is not His will that we should be miserable. There is no virtue in dismal faces and doleful voices. The Bible plainly tells us that Christ wishes our joy to be "full." Does not nature say the same?

"Did God plant His fountains of light in the skies,
That man should look up with the tears in his eyes?
Did God make the world so abundant and fair,
That man should look down with a groan of despair?
Did God fill the earth with harmonious life,
That men should go forth to destruction and strife?
Did God scatter freedom on mountain and wave,
That man should exist as a tyrant or slave?
Away with so hopeless, so joyless a creed,
For the soul that believes it is darkened indeed!"

"New." Novelty is generally attractive. If we meet with a friend, we most likely ask, "What's the news?" When tradesmen advertise, they often tell us that they have "the latest novelties of the season." We call tales "novels." If two books lie on a table, one with dog-eared corners, dirty leaves, dusty covers,—the other with gilt edges, clean pages, and elegant binding,—we shall be sure to take up the new in preference to the old. A little shop with three or four steps to the door, small windows, flickering lamp or candle, and other evidences of antiquity, will not be so likely to secure customers as that which boasts of plate glass, brilliant gas lights, and various other modern improvements. "The people gathered in crowds around the statue," writes a recent traveller, "and looked at it again and again. It was not the finest work of art in the city, nor the most intrinsically attractive. Why, then, did the citizens of Verona stand in such clusters around the effigy of Dante on that summer's evening? Do you guess the reason? It was a fête in honour of the poet? No, you are mistaken; it was but an ordinary evening, and there was nothing peculiar in the date. The reason was very simple: the statue was new!"

"Year." Of course there is something solemn in this. It is a far graver thing to wish any one "a happy new year" than to say "good day" or "good night." Why? Because a year takes a large portion from our existence. The average of human life is but thirty-three years. Antediluvians could count their years by hundreds.

Then a man was, as it were, a youth of promise at fifty. People could say, "A happy new century to you!" They might make remarks like this, "I have not seen you for the last two hundred years." How different is it with us! A year is a serious item in the brief period allotted to us. Nevertheless, if we think a second time about the word "year," there is something pleasant in it. What makes the year? The earth's journey round the sun. It takes three hundred and sixty-five days to accomplish its circuit. This is always the case. There is no variation. It is not sometimes three hundred and sixty-five, and at other times three or four hundred. No. The most perfect order and regularity are observed. Wonderful and cheering fact! We are in the hands of a Being whose kind and wise laws never fail.

"A Happy New Year" is possible. Christ said, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you;" and every Christian may truly say, "Not as the world wisheth wish I unto you." When the world wishes "a happy new year," it usually means, "I wish you health, money, influence, position." But that is a vain wish! All cannot get these things. Even if they obtained them, they would not make us happy. Happiness does not depend upon possessions. Dr. Hamilton tells that when he was a boy he often looked, in winter, with curious eye at certain spots far up a certain mountain. For what reason? Because they seemed to be "suffused with constant sunshine." To his mortification, however, he found that they were only patches of withered grass. In like manner, to us at a distance the high places of wealth and rank seem to be suffused with the sunshine of bliss. We should find, if we got nearer, withered hopes and blighted expectations. Henry VII.'s emblem was a crown in a bush of thorns. A quaint Puritan author says that worldly possessions are like nuts: you scratch your hands and tear your clothes in order to get them, but when you have obtained them they are hard to crack, and when you eat them they fail to satisfy your hunger. The Roman Emperor Severus declared, "I have been everything, and everthing is nothing." Another monarch, taking the crown in his hand, exclaimed, "This is a beautiful burden." Goethe, the great German poet, whose career was one long success, made the following confession: "They have called me a child of fortune, nor have I any wish to complain of the course of my life. Yet it has been nothing but labour and sorrow, and I may truly say that in seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of true comfort!" Lord Byron remarked to his medical attendant: "Do you suppose I wish for life? I have grown heartily sick of it. Can it afford me any pleasure? Have I not enjoyed it to a surfeit? Pleasure I have known under every form in which it can present itself to mortals. I have

travelled, satisfied my curiosity, lost every illusion. I have exhausted all the nectar contained in the cup of life: it is time to throw the dregs away!"

If, then, happiness does not consist in outward possessions, in what does it consist? Not in what we obtain, but in what we contain. It is internal, not external in its sources. Some time ago a young woman, who had been born blind, was subjected to a surgical operation, by which she gained her sight, but at first she experienced the following peculiarity: she had no idea of distances. She thought the far-off to be near, and the near far-off. She put her hand out of the window to touch a tree which stood on the other side of the way. People make a similar mistake about happiness. They think its causes are distant, when in fact they are close to them. Sidney Smith says: "Many run after felicity like an absent-minded man hunting for his hat, while all the time it is on his head." To come to the point at once. Christ is the source of happiness. If we have Him we shall be all right. To trust His promise of pardon, think on His dying love, yield our wills to His perfect will—this, and nothing short, is bliss. "A Christian not happy?" says an accomplished author: "I am now sixty-eight, and am far happier than I was at twenty, principally because the Lord has shown me more of Himself." Yes, the often-quoted words of Scripture are as true as they are old, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

We wish to be frank and plain. Dear reader, are you a Christian? Are you? If you cannot honestly answer, "Yes," there is small prospect of the new year being a really happy one to you. If you live it will not, but *if you die*—what then? You know. We entreat you, then, to act reasonably and wisely. Live no longer without Christ. While yet you linger on the threshold of another twelve months, lift your soul in simple and earnest prayer to Him. "Have mercy upon me, according to Thy loving-kindness." Why not at once say that? "Create in me a clean heart." What better can you do than make such a request? You will be heard. "He delighteth in mercy." Never would the Saviour have died for you if He had not been willing to save poor sinners. Do draw nigh to Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!"

PRAISE THE CHILDREN.

For every child who receives an excess of praise or commendation from its parents, there are ten, at least, who are oftentimes thoughtlessly, but none the less selfishly and cruelly, defrauded of that which is due them in this respect.

Children love praise, they crave it, and will do much to win it. There are exceptional cases, of course. Occasionally we see a child so stolid and indifferent by nature, that praise and blame alike seem wasted on it. But such instances of "total depravity" are few. Childish griefs are short, but they are also bitter; and when a child feels justly-merited praise is withheld from it, through heedlessness or indifference, it matters not which, how sharply does the arrow enter that striving, yearning little heart! It feels that it has been unjustly deprived of a fairly-earned reward; and though it may only realise this in a dim, undefined way, the feeling is there, and a small spirit of resentment, and possibly of insurrection, creeps into the little heart also. Of the injudiciousness, the unwisdom, of excessive praise, it is useless to speak, since the error seems to lie, almost without exception, in the opposite direction.

But, mother, when your little girl has put her whole baby-heart into some little office she is striving to perform for you, when she has been unusually sweet-tempered and good throughout the trying day, whisper approving words in the little eager ear. Tell her, in encouraging phrases (on the tip of every mother's tongue), what a treasure she is to you. Such praise will not be wasted. As the summer's dew upon the rose, words like these will fall upon the child-heart, making it richer with the fragrant incense of duty and love.

Father, if your boy has learned his lessons right well; if the daily tasks he is set to do have been performed more thoroughly and faithfully than usual; if in little ways he has been more thoughtful of your comfort than is his wont, notice these things; not silently, but by word of mouth, generously and cordially approving his conduct. Let him feel that his endeavours are fully appreciated, that no good or noble action on his part passes by you unnoticed. Thus will you incite in him a desire to merit always your approbation, and the resolve to make himself more worthy each day of such a father's love. Withhold not praise from your children when they can claim it as their right. Used wisely, it is a healthy stimulant that cannot injure, but, on the contrary, is productive of results good and lasting. See, in the hurry and worry of the flying days, that you forget it not, lest there be, through your forgetfulness, small heart aches now and great ones hereafter.

WHAT HAS INFIDELITY DONE?

SCEPTICISM, infidelity, false religion, and no religion at all, have had time enough and opportunity enough to do something besides boast, and ought ere this to be able to show some substantial results—some progress that could be cited as proof of the utility of such teachings and the excellence of such inspirations. Infidelity has long railed at Christianity—let it plead now its own cause. What has it ever done for the world, even in the realm of material benefits? What countries has it discovered? What lands has it settled? What governments has it established? What cities has it builded? What missionaries has it sent forth? What savages has it civilised? What schools has it established? What colleges has it founded? What hospitals has it erected? What charities has it fostered? What statesmen, and orators, and patriots, and examples, and heroes, has it produced?

What *is* the record of infidelity, with all her boast of wisdom and of power? Can she name a Columbus or a Livingstone? A Bacon or a Galileo? A Shakespeare or a Milton? A Whitefield or a Wesley? What has infidelity *done?* Where are her cities, her empires, her conquests, her triumphs, her works of art, her discoveries in science? Has she written poems? Who has read them? Has she chanted hymns? Who has sung them?

Infidelity has no hymn-books, sings no hymns, enjoys no visions of a better life than this. Christians sing of an eternal home. They lift their eyes to the heavenly hills, whence cometh their help. They exult in the prospect of a certain inheritance where sickness, sorrow, pain, and death are never known. But the infidel cannot frame a hymn of praise about his vague nowhere! Non-existence invites no song, stirs no affection, enlarges no capacity of the soul. What a poor miserable theory is that which opens no bright hereafter; claims no life and joy beyond the grave; and, instead of praises and thanksgivings, utters nothing better than murmurs and criticisms from the cradle to the grave!

The great doers in history have been men of great faith in God; men whose eyes have been anointed to see invisible things and behold eternal glories. Compared with them, infidels, with all their boastings, are as cyphers in the world—their belief a mere negation, their hearts without inspiration, their legions a routed rabble, without guide or head, without aim and without hope, mere camp-followers in the great warfare of life. After faith has fought the battle, infidelity comes and claims the spoils. After faith has founded an asylum for the oppressed, infidelity comes and struts through it, and boasts of her liberty. After faith has constructed society, infidelity digs, and

roots, and decays, and rots, and burns, and tears down the fairest creations of faith and hope and love. After faith has planted the tree and produced the apple, infidelity gnaws a hole into the middle, eats out its heart, and claims it as a home. Faith builds, infidelity destroys. Faith plants, infidelity uproots. The Bible, fully believed and obeyed, would make any community happy, prosperous, and peaceful; infidelity, carried to its legitimate conclusions, would break up families, subvert society, blast civilisation, paralyse industry, and ruin the world. And if infidelity is worthless in life, what is it in death? What martyr names can it record? What death triumphs can it celebrate? What light plays above the sceptic's tomb? What glory lights the great and glad beyond? Near the end of his days, Byron wrote:—

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruit of love are gone:
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

Near the close of *his* life, Paul wrote: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day." Which is the better, the infidel's despair, or the Christian's hope? "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If the Lord be God serve him, but if Baal then serve him."

ONCE, in the flight of ages past,
There lived a man—and who was he?
Mortal! howe'er thy lot be cast,
The man resembled thee.

And joy and grief, and hope and fear,
Alternate triumphed in his breast:
His bliss and woe—a smile, a tear!
Oblivion hides the rest.

The bounding pulse, the languid limb,
The changing spirit's rise and fall—
We know that these were felt by him,
For these are felt by all.

The annals of the human race—
Their ruins since the world began,
Of *him* afford no other trace
Than this—THERE LIVED A MAN.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

THE SON OF A KING.

One fine summer evening a crowd of workmen were passing along through the streets of the city of Hamburg. As the multitude swept by, an old shoemaker was sitting under a shade before his door, busily engaged in mending a shoe. Sometimes he would stop a little from his work, and sing a verse or two of one of the old German psalms, which he loved very much. A well-dressed young man, a student in the university, was passing this evening. When he heard the merry voice of the shoemaker he stopped, and said to him,—

"Well, my friend, you seem to be happy and contented."

"I am happy, sir," said the old man; "and why shouldn't I be?"

"I don't know," said the student. "A great many people are not happy. You seem to be very poor. I suppose you have none but yourself to work for?"

"You are mistaken, sir," said the shoemaker, "I have a wife and seven children to feed and support with the work of these hands. I'm a poor man, it's true, but that is no reason why I shouldn't work and be happy."

"I am very much surprised to see a poor workman like you so contented, and I don't understand what can make you so."

"Stranger," said the shoemaker, laying down his work, and taking hold of the young man's arm with a grave and serious look—"stranger, I am not so poor as you think. Let me tell you, *I am the son of a King.*"

The young man turned away, saying to himself, "Poor fellow, he is crazy. He imagines he is well off when he is poor. This is what makes him happy. I was beginning to think that perhaps he might be able to tell me the great secret I am seeking—that of true happiness. But I was mistaken."

A week passed by, and the young student again had occasion to pass the same street. He found the old shoemaker sitting in the same place, still busy with his work and singing as cheerfully as before. As he drew near the young man lifted his cap in a mocking sort of way, and, making a bow to the shoemaker, said, "Good morning, Mr. Prince."

"Stop, my friend," said the shoemaker, laying down his work, "I wish to say a few words to you, if you please. You left me suddenly the other evening, as if you thought I was crazy."

"To tell you the truth," said the young man, "that is just what I *did* think."

"Well, my friend," continued the shoemaker, "I am not crazy. What I then said I said in earnest. It is true, every word of it. I am *the son of a King*. Just sit down here and listen while I tell you about it."

Now this young man was a Jew. He had been taught to read the Old Testament Scriptures when he was a child, and to believe in them. But since he had grown up he had given up his faith in the Bible, and had ceased to read it. He was like a sailor out at sea who has lost his compass. He could not tell whither he was going, or how to steer, and this made him feel very miserable. Just as a drowning man will catch at straws, so this young man was ready to catch at anything that seemed likely to help him in trying to find out how to be happy. He sat down, therefore, and listened to his humble friend.

Then the shoemaker began, and told him of the promises of the Old Testament about a glorious King who was to be Saviour and Ruler of the world. He showed him that all the things that are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, about this glorious King, had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He declared how He had suffered and died for our sins; how He had risen from the grave, and had gone up to take His seat in glory at the right hand of God. He told how He had sent His messengers into all the world, to tell men what He had done for them; and how all who had repented of their sins and believed in Him would be pardoned and made happy now, and at last be saved in Heaven for ever; and that Jesus was going to come back again to this world, in His own appointed time, to set up a glorious kingdom, and that all who love and serve Him now will share the glories of His kingdom and reign with Him.

The young student sat listening with great interest to what his poor friend was saying. He had often read the promises of the Old Testament, but he had never thought of them in connection with Jesus Christ. This was all new to him. He was astonished at what he heard.

"And now, young man," said the shoemaker, "don't you see how truly I could say, 'I am the son of a King?' Don't you see what reason I have to be contented and happy? It is because I belong to Jesus. I believe in Him, and I love Him. The Bible tells me that all things shall work together for good to me, and that all things are mine, because I am Christ's. Isn't this enough to make one happy?"

"Where can I learn more about these things?" asked the young

man. "I see that you believe them, and this gives you peace and contentment. Oh, how I long for them!" Then the shoemaker gave the young man a copy of the Bible. He told him to take it home and read it carefully, and to pray over its contents. The young Jewish student read the Bible diligently, and in so doing found the secret of true peace of mind. He afterwards became a missionary to his own people, and preached to them about the peace and joy he had found in Jesus.

"A STRANGER."

In a long list of names—a record of deaths in S——, published in the newspapers—stood once this simple, affecting announcement:—"Aug. 21.—A Stranger."

Who is he? There is no name on the books. There is not one in the throng that crowd the dining-hall that knew him; none whose appetite is lessened by the melancholy inquiry. They hurry on the burial, for another is waiting for the dead man's room; and the next morning's paper contains the careless item, "A stranger died yesterday."

And perhaps in some distant village, a mother, a wife, a betrothed maiden, is anxiously watching every arriving post, and wondering why no letter comes from the beloved absent one. And still for many a weary day will they wait and hope, for there is none to convey the crushing intelligence that the beloved is no more.

What pangs will shoot through many hearts as this simple announcement is read and remembered! If the name had only been there, the anguish of suspense would be ended. But perhaps it may have been my brother, my son, my husband, will be the suggestion of many a troubled spirit, even when the lips refuse to utter the alarm of the heart.

A stranger! And yet he was well known to God. His eye had traced him through all his journeyings, had witnessed all his errors and sins, and his repentings and prayers, too, if any were offered. If he was a renewed child of God, there was abundant consolation administered to his departing spirit. A voice, sweeter than that of dearest earthly friend, whispered comfort to his soul; and a hand, more soft and tender than that of wife or mother, was laid beneath his aching head. If he was a true disciple of Jesus, he now experiences no regret that his sojourn in this world was so short, that the bright visions of earthly wealth, which perhaps led him away so far from home to die, were dispelled, for he has become a resident, and no nameless stranger, in that city whose very streets are paved

with gold, where a golden crown is on every head and a golden harp in every hand.

And if he were not a Christian,—but we dare not dwell on that thought; it is too fearful!

THE ONE THING.

"THERE is but one thing wanted to make us comfortable." So said a young wife to her husband one pleasant spring morning, ere he went to his daily toil. They had been married some months, and had just established themselves in one of the many pleasant villages with which the country abounds. Both were full of hope, the future opened before them rich in promise. A house had been taken in a quiet, unpretending part of the town, and for some weeks they had been planning and setting things to rights.

How busy was that young wife during all those spring days! She scarcely noticed the rapid and beautiful changes which the God of nature was making all around her. The frosts had disappeared, the buds had swollen, nay, the green leaves had come out, and the flowers had burst forth, and the sweet warblings of birds floated by as the breeze swept past their open doors, but she gave little heed to them all. Was she not a wife, with a husband dearer to her than herself? And they had a home, too, of their own, and that home should be made a sanctuary for her husband, whither he could flee from the dust and noise of the world without, and find repose and strength in the smiles and kind words of at least one loving heart. Oh, how many plans were laid and arrangements made within these quiet walls,—hardly quiet, though, for there was the hurried tread of busy feet; and then two little hands, that rather rebelled against the harsh ways to which they were often subjected, wrought most diligently from morning till night. The book-case must be placed here, the drawers there, and those pretty engravings must be hung yonder against the wall; and now they must all be changed, to see if another position will not produce a better effect, and give more character to the room.

And now the house is all furnished, and the wife is so happy at the satisfied and complaisant looks with which her husband regards the disposition which she has made of this piece of furniture and that. And how does her heart beat with delight, and run over with affection for him, as he commends her taste, and speaks of the place she has in his affections; how often he thinks of her when prosecuting his daily toil, and how gladly he welcomes the hour that calls him to her side. They are so happy, so essential to each other already to live. Not

quite, however, for there was one room, after all, not yet fitted up. This was the parlour, and this is what called forth the words at the beginning of this article, from the young housekeeper. Not many days passed before, by the kindness of friends, the parlour was furnished, the carpet down, the curtains up, and the sofa inviting to a lounge. "The one thing to make them comfortable" was no longer wanted. The parlour, of course, was not to be used every day; so one evening, after the last touch had been given by those tasteful hands, husband and wife sat together alone, on their sofa, and as they remembered the past and looked hopefully into the future, there was joy in their hearts and exclamations of joy came from their lips. And they did not forget God in their happiness; the youthful pair acknowledged Him that evening, and prayed for a Father's blessing to attend them. Rising from their knees, the room was darkened and left. But were they comfortable? We will look upon them again.

Several weeks have elapsed, and during these weeks sad changes have taken place in that new home. Disease has crossed its threshhold, and that parlour is the sick-room—it has been used for no other purpose. We will enter it. The shadows have darkened the earth and the stars are looking from the sky as serenely as though there was no sadness in this world. But there is sadness in that parlour, such as never entered it before. There lies the young wife struggling with pain; you would scarcely know her, so emaciated and thin; the husband is by her side. Through what a fiery ordeal is he passing; how wildly does his heart throb. They are expecting a guest—he may come any moment—they are waiting for Death.

The lips of the sick one move, the husband bends over the couch to catch those faint whispers. How much it costs to control himself as he hears, "My husband, we have had a happy home, but we shall have a happier one in heaven. The Saviour is so precious. He is with me. He will be with you. Farewell." And now Death has come, he has taken her by the hand, his icy breath has chilled her brow. "The silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher lies shivered at the fountain." But he did not touch the sweet smile of resignation and joy which the departing spirit in its passage to the skies left on that face; this lingered there till the precious dust was laid away to its rest.

"There is but one thing wanted to make us comfortable." What is it? True, we really need but one thing—the religion of the Lord Jesus. Without this, we shall not live well; with it, we shall go safely through the dark valley. Reader, you may have all other things that are needful to make you happy. Have you the one thing?

Varieties.

A Rebuke to a Swearer.—A general officer, who was in early life much addicted to profane oaths, dated his reformation to the memorable check he received from a Scotch clergyman. When he was lieutenant, and settled at Newcastle, he got involved in a brawl with some of the lowest class in the public street; and the altercation was carried on by both parties with abundance of impious language. The clergyman, passing by, was shocked with the profanity, and stepping into the crowd with his cane uplifted, thus addressed one of the leaders of the rabble; "Oh, John, John! what is this I hear? you only a poor collier boy, and swearing like any lord in the land! Oh, John! have you no fear of what will become of you? It may do very well for this gallant gentleman (pointing to the lieutenant) to bang and swear as he pleases; but you—you, John, it is not for you, or the like of you, to take in vain the name of Him in whom you live and have your being!" Then turning to the lieutenant, "You'll excuse the poor man, sir; for he is an ignorant body, and kens nae better." The young officer shrank away in confusion, unable to make any reply. Next day he waited on the minister, and thanked him sincerely for his well-timed reproof, and was ever after an example of correctness of language.

Little Children.—I am fond of children. I think them the poetry of the world—the fresh flowers of our hearts and homes; little conjurors, with their "natural magic," evoking by their spells what delights and enriches all ranks, and equalises the different classes of society. Often as they bring with them anxieties and cares, and live to occasion sorrow and grief, we should get on very badly without them. Only think if there were never anything anywhere to be seen but great grown-up men and women! How we should long for the sight of a little child! Every infant comes into the world like a delighted prophet, the harbinger and herald of good tidings, whose office it is "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and to draw "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." A child softens and purifies the heart, warming and melting it by its gentle presence; it enriches the soul by new feelings, and awakens within it what is favourable to virtue. Infants recall us from much that engenders and encourages selfishness, that freezes the affections, roughens the manners, indurates the heart; they brighten the home, deepen love, invigorate exertion, infuse courage, and vivify and sustain the charities of life. It would be a terrible world, I do think, if it was not embellished by little children.

BEHIND TIME!

A RAILROAD train was running along at almost lightning speed. A curve was just ahead. The train was late, very late. Nevertheless, the engine-driver hoped to pass the curve safely. He made as much haste as he could, putting on full steam. Suddenly a locomotive dashed into sight. In an instant there was a collision. A shriek, a shock, and then what frightful slaughter! Many valuable lives were lost; and all because an engineer was behind time.

The battle of Waterloo was being fought. Column after column had been precipitated upon the enemy. The sun was sinking in the west. Reinforcements for the defenders were already in sight. It was necessary to carry the position with one final charge. A powerful corps had been summoned from across the country. The great conqueror, confident of its arrival, formed his reserve into an attacking column, and led them down the hill. The world knows the result. Napoleon died a prisoner at St. Helena, and probably one of the main reasons was that a certain commander was behind time.

A condemned man was being led out for execution. He had taken human life, but under circumstances of the greatest provocation. Thousands had signed a petition for a reprieve. None arrived. The last moment was up. The prisoner took his place on the drop, it fell, and a lifeless body swung in the air. Just at this moment a horseman came into sight, his steed covered with foam. He bore a reprieve for the culprit: but he had come too late. A comparatively innocent man had died an ignominious death, because a watch had been five minutes too slow, causing the bearer to arrive behind time.

Similar things often occur; about both trivial and important matters many people are wonderfully dilatory. They are so fond of putting off. "Plenty of time," cry they. When you try to hasten them, they say, "There's no hurry." To-morrow is their favourite day. It would puzzle one to calculate how often they have neglected various affairs by declaring that they would "see to them to-morrow."

It is so about salvation. Delay is a sunken rock on which thousands make shipwreck. A man hears a plain, common-sense, earnest sermon concerning Christ. He listens with pleasure to the affectionate and fervent words which are spoken. He sees quite clearly the need of pardon, and the way to get it. But as he goes away from chapel or church he thinks, "Ah, it is all very good. I have nothing to say against it. What the minister says is quite right; but there's plenty of time. I can't attend to it just now."

What folly! Nothing can be more foolish! To leave religion to the chapter of accidents is an outrage on reason. Who can tell what an hour may bring forth? The only time of which any human being can be certain, is time present. Dear reader, if you are not saved, we beg of you to get salvation at once. It is the only safe course. Multitudes who were as healthful, and as hopeful, too, as you are, have talked of "plenty of time," and yet been lost. Take warning!

"Oh," perhaps you exclaim, "I'm not going to be frightened into religion. None of your dismal stories for me. You won't get me to come to Christ, as you call it, by attempting to alarm me. Fear is a very poor weapon for wise men to fight with!" Don't be angry. Hard words do no good. Keep calm a moment or two. Listen: we have no particular wish to alarm you, but we do wish to see you saved, and if no other means will arouse, why not alarm? Fear is not the highest motive power, but it is often very useful. It will sometimes do what other means fail to accomplish. Boerhave had a number of patients in a hospital, who, when they saw a certain person have epileptic fits, fell down in convulsions. He cured them by ordering hot irons to be prepared, and applied to the first who had a fit. We need not say that the said irons were never actually used. An officer confined to his bed in India by an attack of asthma so severe that he could not draw his sword, hearing that the enemy had broken into the camp, rose, went out, and fought right bravely. During the great fire in Hamburg many bed-ridden invalids arose, and never had occasion to take to their beds again. Was not fear beneficial in their cases? And it is often useful in a religious point of view. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Yes, there is moral power, power over the sinner's soul, in the thought of Divine anger. Look at Nineveh. The Lord's generous care in the bestowment of daily mercies failed to lead its people to repentance. All the gifts of Providence seemed lost on them. Not so the mission of Jonah. Forth he goes, up and down the streets of the populous pagan city, declaring the coming judgment of the Most High. What was the result? Universal expressions of penitence. May we use a homely illustration? See yonder sluggard. He slumbers long after others have gone to their daily toils. How hard he sleeps! Various sounds there are, all of which are lost upon him. Voices are heard in the thoroughfare below, and carriages pass along; still he sleeps. Birds fly and sing about the chamber-window, still his eyes are closed. Besides this, the glorious sun looks into his room, fills it with radiance, and shines full on his prostrate form, still he remains unconscious. Presently, however, the sky darkens,

heavy clouds gather, the red lightning flashes, and is followed by a peal of thunder, which seems to shake the house from its foundations to its roof. Now he starts up! The terrible has done what the gentle and the ordinary could not accomplish. In like manner the thunder-threats of the Bible not seldom rouse sinners when nothing else will. "Many men affect to despise fear," remarks a very eminent American divine, "and in preaching resent any appeal to it; but *not to fear when there is occasion is as great a weakness as to fear unduly*. God planted fear in the soul as truly as He planted hope or courage. Fear is a kind of bell, or gong, which rings the mind into quick life and avoidance on the approach of danger; it is the soul's signal for rallying."

Let it be *your* signal. It is no light matter to live and die in sin. Sin must lead to misery and shame. Be persuaded, then, we beseech you, to seek the Saviour. "Flee from the wrath to come." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

THE BREVITY OF LIFE.

To the young it does not seem short; it seems very long. To the boy of fourteen the man of forty seems a long way off, and he of sixty removed by an age almost illimitable. But as time passes on the aspect of life changes. The man of forty thinks forty not nearly as old as he thought it when he was fourteen; fifty appears to him but the prime of life; sixty far from aged. When, at length, increasing years admonish him that his life-work is ended, and that he can enter on no new undertakings, and he looks back to reflect upon what he has accomplished, he wonders to see so little, and is amazed to find the road so short in travelling, which appeared so long in prospect. He then understands as he never did before the meaning of Scripture simile. "Yes," he says to himself, "it is indeed true. Life is as a tale that is told, and as a dream when one awaketh."

A moment's careful reflection will suffice, however, to convince the thoughtful that the old man's estimate is right, and the young man's wrong. The time is short in which to achieve anything for God, for humanity, or for ourselves.

The average length of human life is stated to be thirty-five years. This average, however, includes an estimate of all those who die in infancy. The statement of the average life of a healthy man may be enlarged somewhat. But it is perfectly safe to say that it is not over fifty years. Some live on to threescore years, or even to threescore years and ten, but more never reach the half century.

Of this fifty years the first twenty are taken in learning how to live. Something the young can accomplish; but youth is the time for receiving, not imparting—for preparing to achieve, not for achievement. Thirty years may be fairly accepted as the average limit of the working life.

But no man works the full twenty-four hours. Rest, recreation, food, sleep, Sabbath, and the enforced idleness which occasional illness compels, reduce the period two-thirds. Eight hours a day are as many as the brain or muscle can ordinarily stand. Some work more, but few to the best advantage. Year in and year out, eight hours may be taken to represent the working day. The working life, then, is not thirty years; it is but ten. And of these ten years how much is necessarily absorbed by the drudgery of toil, by the gathering of grain that dies in the harvesting, and is never garnered into storehouses? How much in getting clothing to be put on and worn out, in getting food to be consumed in use, in building houses to crumble and fall into decay, almost as soon as their owners? How much, too, of this time is lost in plans that come to nought, in sowing what never ripens, in fighting battles that are defeats? When we have taken from our life what time is necessary for preparation, what is required for rest and recreation, and what is absorbed in failure and transient success, the fragment that is left is very small—two, three, or five years at the most.

"Then what my hands design to do
Let me with all my might pursue,
Since no device nor work is found
Nor faith nor hope beneath the ground."

THE MASTER'S CALL.

THOSE are both touching and suggestive words that we find in the eleventh chapter of St. John's Gospel—the chapter that contains the account of our Lord's visit to Bethany after the death of His friend Lazarus—when Martha, addressing her sister Mary, says to her, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee," and where it is added, "As soon as she heard that, she rose quickly, and came unto Him.* This call to the bereaved sister was an expression of our Lord's tender compassion for and sympathy with her: it was also, though Mary little thought it at the time, a call to her to witness, beside her brother's opened grave, a fresh and most wonderful exhibition of

* John xi. 28, 29.

the Saviour's power. The incident, as a whole, is inexpressibly affecting and impressive. It illustrates at once the Divine authority of our Lord, who was able even to raise a dead man from the grave; and likewise the tender compassion and sympathy of Him whom Martha and Mary were privileged to call Master and Friend.

Are we not warranted, however, in thinking of the words we have quoted as addressed, not to the sorrowing sister only, but likewise to ourselves? Is it not true, in a very real and a very blessed sense, that "the Master is come, and calleth for *us*"? If it be so, the question cannot but occur, Has His call been listened to and obeyed? Have we, like Mary, "arisen quickly and come unto Him"? Or are we rather amongst those to whom His call, gracious as it is, has been addressed hitherto in vain?

For it is worthy of notice that the call which is addressed to us, like that which was addressed to Mary, is a call to receive the Saviour's favour and benediction. We might have expected that it would be a call to judgment. If we were wholly ignorant of the Gospel teaching, the cry, "THE MASTER IS COME," would be quite as appalling as was that other cry, "THE BRIDEGROOM IS COME," to those virgins in the parable who, when the bridegroom came at midnight, had "no oil in their vessels with their lamps." * But the call of the Master, when it comes to us, is always a call to *pardon*. Vile though we may have been—sinners as we are—He offers us a free and full forgiveness on the ground of the expiation for sin that He made on Calvary. He offers us, not pardon only, but also *sanctification*, or holiness. Perhaps, sometimes, when we have been led to realise our sinfulness, we may have been induced to whisper the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." † He who uttered that prayer at the first, knew that God only could answer it. All who have been made to feel their sinfulness have been ready to make a similar confession. But, to all who sincerely offer such a prayer, the Master's call is an assurance that it will be answered. This is His own pathetic appeal:—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." ‡ Rest—from the conflict that rages in your hearts! Rest—from the fear of spiritual opposition and disaster! Rest—from the dread of eternal condemnation! For, if we have accepted His gift of pardon and sanctification, He offers us also *heaven*. That is to be the crown and consummation of all. To Martha he said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Those words were meant, not for her only, but for the world. They point

* Matt. xxv. 1–13. † Psa. li. 10. ‡ Matt. xi. 28.

to the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." *

But the words that have been last quoted suggest the means by which the blessings that the Master offers are to be secured. "*By faith*," says the Apostle; and the words are all-important. It was because Mary had "faith" in the reality of the Master's call that she "arose quickly, and came unto Him." It was because she had "faith" in the efficacy of His power and love—though she little knew how wonderfully they would be exerted—that she "fell down at His feet." Oh, if she had refused to come! This story could then never have been written, and one of the grandest of all the exhibitions of the Lord's divine power and love could never have been given to the world. Happily, Mary knew who it was that called her. She was able to join in the testimony that had already been given by her sister: "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world." With what willing feet must she have responded to His call! How gladly, though still sorrowfully, must she have given Him her homage and adoration! But the faith that is requisite in our case is hardly different from hers. We also need to listen to the Saviour's call. If we listen, we can but worship and obey. Though the Master does not appear to us in human form, He calls us as really as He called Mary. He calls us by His word; He calls us by His providences; He calls us by His Holy Spirit, who graciously applies both His word and His providences to our consciences and our hearts. Reader, you know that He has called *you*. Perhaps you can remember times when He has called so loudly that you could not fail to hear. But have you "come to him"? Have you worshipped and obeyed? If you have, you have found something of the peace which He brought to the broken-hearted sisters at Bethany. If you have not, you are still destitute of the blessedness that He only can bestow!

Reader, remember that the time will come, when, in a sense very different from any that has been yet suggested, "the Master will come, and will call for *you*." Will you be ready? He calls you now that He may offer to you eternal life. Shall it ever be that He will call you before Him for everlasting condemnation?

* 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

THE SAVOUR OF DEATH.

It has often been remarked, with no less sorrow than surprise, in how many and painful instances the labours of Christian instruction fail of success. Thousands of immortal beings are brought beneath the sound of saving truth, become the objects of the prayers, the efforts, and the hopes which God Himself has inspired, yet without affording the least reason to suppose they are at all profited or blessed. The good seed has indeed been sown, but it was in a barren soil; it may have sprung up with promise of a crop, but it only flourished to decay and blossomed to die.

Nevertheless there is one solemn and melancholy thought, that the Gospel, if fully proclaimed, cannot but exert its power. Believed and obeyed, or rejected and despised, the words of Jesus are sounds of salvation or seals of death. If His gracious accents are unheard, the responsibility is slight, the guilt is small; but once falling on the ear, and intelligible to the heart, they become germs of a new and mighty destiny of happiness or woe.

It seems but yesterday, though it is far back in the past, since a group of young and hopeful scholars gathered round the blazing fire one New Year's eve. At this midnight moment, though more than fifteen years have stretched themselves between, the memory of the time and place and every circumstance of joy is vivid as those forms of beauty sometimes peopling our dreams. And the force of argument, or the soberness of truth, can hardly break the strong illusion stealing on the soul.

The snow was drifting thickly in the roads as many a light and cheerful step tripped along the well-known footpath to the minister's house. In vain the bitter north wind beat upon the face or howled in fitful sadness among the naked trees; it could not keep the eager visitors within their homes. Singly, or in friendly parties, they hurried on their way, till, at the appointed season, none were absent from the hearth. Once again and earthly union was complete; for as yet the pale destroyer had spared his prey, and then no imp of ruin had made havoc in the fold.

In such a youthful circle we may be sure conversation would not quickly flag; nevertheless, as the hours flew rapidly away and parting was at hand, a strange unwonted silence took possession of the room. The voice of mirth seemed most appropriately hushed, that serious musing might prepare the soul for sweet communion

with her God. But ere the worthy host besought the blessing from on high, he deemed it right to address a faithful word to each softened, and perhaps tender, heart. The all-important question was proposed, "Are you indeed for Christ?" and while the answer trembled on the lip, the wavering and the careless were alike taught to say, "It shall be even so." That another year's light should not dawn upon their eyes, which were not upturned to heaven in penitential prayer. Only one giddy trifler scorned the appeal, and from the almost tearful admonition turned away and smiled. She, alas, was already playing with a snare, and knew not, in her sinful folly, it was for her life.

Presently the young assembly retired to their beds, though not immediately to sleep. It had been a day of scarcely interrupted enjoyment; hope and pleasant realisation marked its dawning and decline. And now that nightly shadows tranquillized the mind, solemnity, but the least of sadness, settled on the brow; save when the thoughts reverted to the pastor's broken sigh, as Ann, the idol daughter of his bosom, pierced with unutterable anguish the wounded, widowed heart.

Let us turn, however, to another and far different scene. An interval of twelve months has once more elapsed, and the time of annual entertainment again draws near. Wintry winds are moaning round the empty house or beat against the casement mingled hail and rain. A solitary candle gleams from the upper room, revealing a wan, wasted watcher seated by the fireless grate. See, he rolls his eye-balls as if in maniac sleep, and now, be God his refuge, falls upon his knees. Yes, he will still prevail; the spirit shall sustain its sorrow and the knife be stayed. He rises, takes up for a moment the implement of death, and, shuddering, but with a grateful heavenward smile, hides it in his trunk.

Mark you, reader, the effect of sin in that sadly altered home; and listen, if inclined to pity, while we trace the change. The New Year's morning broke upon Ann with a thoughtless glance of joy; on her father with anxious fear. He guessed quite well the nature of her hopes, the false and selfish basis of her promised bliss. His daughter, he felt certain, would ere long be lost; yet how to stop the ruin he did not know. Kindness had in vain been lavished on a breast of stone; authority was, too late, exerted, and despised. At length, to pass by pangs of agony and shame, she left for ever the habitation of her youth.

Seasons steadily revolved; the earth, despite the guilt of its possessors, still brought forth food; but the minister's once smiling garden remained unsown; the late cheerful worker on a summer's dawn, now crept, at post-meridian shadows, from his sleepless bed,

and often tasted his embittered crust, and again retired. The debts of a spendthrift harlot were freely paid, but it cost the upright parent all. Would that the worthless gold of Ophir were the only loss! To peace of mind, to confidence betrayed, to half of what he suffered, or his daughter sought, call it priceless gain!

Nothing had been heard of this abandoned female till the night we have just described. She was then advertised to appear at a neighbouring theatre, in connection with a company of players travelling to the north. The miserable father observed the bill, and, not with groundless curiosity, read the agonizing fact. It was so sudden a revelation that it rent his soul and almost drove distracted madness to a desperate deed. On the impulse of the moment he resolved to go. Muffling his cloak close around him, his long hair given to the winds, a love which no fear could trammel and no cruelty could quench bore him heedless through the cold. The crowd assembled at the door of Satan's seat involuntarily made way; such a strange unearthly form had seldom yet approached the synagogue of hell. Nevertheless, on the threshold the preacher paused; he hardly dared, even with plea of duty, to enter the unhallowed walls. At this instant, however, the band struck up, and the eager multitude pressed forward the bewildered dreamer in their struggle for the pit. Hastily purchasing permission to stand near the stage, he waited, with trembling anticipation, the curtain's rise. In a few minutes cheers broke forth from every corner of the house—the favourite actress of the evening bowed her introduction to the admiring throng. Apparently regardless of universal gaze, she went through successive characters with affecting grace, and at each repeated recitation drew fresh applause. Yet beneath the triumphant flushes which now lit her cheek, an anxious eye detected the faded bloom. But *one* there was, of all her selfish friends, who pitied while he loved, and dropped the tear of bitterest regret as he saw the feeble sufferer again appear.

The excited buzz of several hundred voices became a calm; the fair enchantress was about to sing. While, however, she waited silence to begin, her glance had rested on that old man's piercing smile. His countenance still seemed familiar, though so sadly changed; she had seen it often, but never thus. The first few stanzas trembled on her tongue; but here the melancholy sweetness raised the pulses of a parent's life. He leaned himself forward, and then stood revealed. "My father," cried the agitated actress;—the curtain dropped.

Shall we take the reader to the last solemn scene? We would point him to a dying bed. It is tended by a weeping parent, and around are others ready to assist. Everything to assuage expiring

pangs is offered, but no hope is there. This was for ever banished from the guilty heart, when, in the greatness of her folly, she went astray. "Surely the dear young lady can recollect a prayer," says the kind, deluded nurse, forgetful that the sinning soul had long since ceased to pray. "Remember Jesus," whispers the more enlightened saint. "I do, and perish," is the last mortal sigh. Day was breaking through the overhanging clouds as the spirit took its flight; and the wretched father wandered forth upon the earth, till the voice of mercy called him to the skies.

Perhaps this page will be read by few who have not heard of Christ. The name which angels honour is, indeed, known on earth; nor can we for a moment question that it is known in hell. In the abodes of glory as a theme of praise—in a world of sinners as the ground of hope—in the pit of ruin, as a knell of woe. There, and there only, in that awful gulf, the knowledge costs them dear.

If there be, in all the realms of darkness, an imprisoned soul from whom, through all his lifetime, Jesus was concealed, favoured above outcast Israel must be such as he. Millions around are envying his lot, who heard themselves of pardon at the Saviour's cross, and sealed perdition in His slighted blood.

Dwellers in a Christian country, sitting in the light of truth, your privilege is exalted, your responsibility untold. Only those can tell it who look back upon the path, either from the happy heights of heaven, or the gloomy depths of hell. These possess in rapture or despair, whatever you must realise as a last result.

THE TRUE WATER.

Some travellers were passing over a dry sandy desert. They were hot and tired and parched with thirst, and they longed for some water. "See," said the guide; "look where those three palm-trees rise out of that little patch of grass; there we shall find a little spring oozing out of the ground that will satisfy us all." "That is a mere puddle," said one of the travellers; "it is not enough to satisfy us. Look yonder; there is a vast lake. How odd that we did not notice it before! Let us make haste up to it."

The travellers all turned where he pointed with his finger, and they saw, to their great surprise, a beautiful lake that seemed not far off. They all shouted for joy, and began to run toward it. But the guide cried, "Stop! I know this country well, and I can tell you that yonder lake is not real water. It is only a pretence, and when you come close to it, you will find it will vanish away."

But the travellers said, "Have we not eyes? Can we not see for ourselves? Come, let us leave this lazy guide, if he will not come with us." So they all ran toward the lake. But when they came close to it, they found it was just as the guide said. The lake vanished away, and there was nothing but dry sand where they had hoped to find water. Then they were very sorry, and said, "We ought to have believed the guide; now we must go back to him."

"Nay," said one of them, "have patience. Look, there is another lake a little further off." They raised their eyes, and true enough, there lay a beautiful lake that seemed not a mile off. But the wisest of the travellers said, "No, that is perhaps not true water; perhaps it will vanish like the first lake. Let us go back."

So the travellers went back to the spring where they had left the guide, and when they came they found the water was enough to satisfy the thirst of every one of them. But one foolish man, instead of going back, went further forward, following the false lake, which kept vanishing whenever he came near to it. Night came on, and he lay down all alone, ready to die with thirst. I do not know what became of him; but I hope the good guide found him next day, and brought him back to the true water.

Your soul, as well as your body, wants something to satisfy it. Perhaps you think you would be satisfied all your life if you had plenty of pleasant things, or as much money as you liked; but you would not. Suppose you had all these things, yet, if all people disliked you, and you disliked them, you would not feel satisfied; you would say, "I do not feel easy; I do not feel at peace."

True peace comes to us when we love all people like brothers and sisters. Jesus helps us to love one another, and He alone can give us true peace. Some people say, "We shall be satisfied and happy if we can get plenty of money, or if we can have houses and gardens and farms, or if we can make people praise us, and say we are clever." But money and houses and praise cannot give us peace. They are like the false lakes. When we get them, we find the peace is not there. It has vanished from its place, and seems to have gone further off. Pray to Jesus and say, "Give us that peace which the world cannot give."

THE COLLIER'S LAST MEETING.

One evening at a religious meeting held by the American evangelists, Messrs. Moody and Sankey, in Edinburgh, a grim, tough-looking miner might have been seen among the listeners on one of the forward seats. He was one of those who know not only what it is to love sin, but what it is to have enough of it, and grow tired of it. His conscience was not dead, but no influence near him had ever seemed strong enough to ripen into confession his secret longings for a better heart.

Now his interest was excited by the fame of the foreign preachers and their work in Scotland, and he came, partly in curiosity, and partly in serious earnest to hear them.

And a model hearer he was that evening, whether he knew it or not. Prayers, hymns, preaching, the rough man drank in eagerly. The service began to have a strange charm for him. It was not so much that it was new, as that it took hold of him in a new way.

Before long his heart told him that he was listening to God's pleadings, and not to the two evangelists who led the meeting. The short sermon came home to him like the cry of his own soul. Those sweet hymns touched him like music from the heavenly city; and before he was aware his eyes were wet. One after another the simple melodies broke upon his ear and melted him to penitence.

The general exercises over, he started as if from a spell. His companion, a rugged fellow-miner, who had been less affected than himself, rose to go, and he rose with him. They walked a little down the aisle, but the penitent man could go no further. He turned back and sat down.

"Come, John," said his comrade, "come awa' hame."

"Na," said John. "I came here to get good, an' I hinna ta'en it a' in yet."

Before he left the house that night he was led to consecrate himself, a penitent man, unreservedly to Christ. The "old, old story" had not been told him in vain.

"I ha'e thocht often an' often, it maun be true," he said, "an' noo I believe it. It bides in me, an' makes peace. I'm sure o' my Saviour at last." And so he went home.

Next day, while he was at work far down in the deep coal-pit, a mass of stone or "horseback" fell on him from the roof of the mine, and crushed him so badly that he could not live. The other colliers rushed to him, and tried to aid him, but he knew he was dying. "Bend doon your ear to me," he whispered to one of them who stood over him. The man stooped and caught his last words—"Oh, Andrew, I'm thankful I settled it last night!"

MINDING ONE'S OWN BUSINESS.

"MIND your own business!" These well-known words have a somewhat vulgar sound. They seem to savour of anything but a courteous spirit. It is not difficult to see why such is the case. It is because they are often used by people who are not in the best of tempers. In themselves they are good, and contain excellent advice. Indeed, they are Scriptural. In one of his letters, St. Paul tells his brother Christians to "study to be quiet, and do your own business." How much better and happier the world would be if the precept were carried out! Nations would be spared infinite mischief and misery. Where would war be then? There would be little occasion for it. If tribes and peoples would attend to their own affairs, develop their resources, make the best of the natural products which Providence has given them, instead of interfering with each other and watching for opportunities of stealing each other's territories, the soldier would be useless and the sword rest in its sheath. So of individuals. What misfortune would be prevented if all were to cultivate habits of industry and perseverance! Surely, half the failures and disasters of commerce are owing to men not diligently attending to their work. Idleness is sure to end in loss. "Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee," said Old Richard, and Old Richard was quite right. The divine rule is plain and fair: "He that will not work, neither shall he eat."

But there are certain classes to whom the title at the top of the page is specially applicable. Evil speakers will do well to remember it. We all know people who delight in scandal. They are fond of backbiting. Seldom are they heard to utter a good word of anybody. Nothing affords them more gratification than to discover, exhibit, and enlarge upon the weaknesses and defects of others. Humboldt mentions a tribe of Indians who eat dirt; and there are civilised persons who imitate their example. With them "ill news flies apace." If a fellow-citizen who lives in the same town or street goes wrong, they bandy it about from one to another, as children do a ball at play. This is pitiable. Let them rather look at home, and see that their own garments are undefiled. A lady once complained to Frederick the Great that her husband treated her badly. "That," said the emperor, "is no business of mine." "But," said the lady, "he speaks ill of you." "That," replied the emperor, "is no business of yours." The rebuke was deserved. Equally so was

that of a certain minister, whose candour was exhibited on the following occasion. Some young ladies at his house were talking about one of their female friends. As he entered the room, he heard the words, "odd," "singular," "strange," &c., applied to her. He asked and was told the name of the young lady in question, and then said very gravely: "Yes, she is an odd young lady. She is a *very* odd young lady. I consider her extremely singular." He then added, impressively: "She was never heard to speak ill of an absent friend."

Again: the saying under consideration is worthy of the notice of those who are fond of dwelling on the inconsistencies of the Church. As the Scribes and Pharisees "watched" Christ, and were on the alert to find fault with His sayings and doings, so not a few now keep their eyes on His followers, eager to discover flaws in their conduct. Henry Ward Beecher says: "I have a cat in the country, that, knowing there is a rat in the drain, will be crouched in the grass for six hours together, waiting for the rat to come out. And I know people that watch at doors where Christians use to come out just as patiently and with as much humanity." They are silent enough about the good points in believers. Brave struggles with temptation, honest efforts to be useful, quiet but genuine self-sacrifice for the sake of others, real sympathy with the great object for which the Saviour came—all this they allow to pass without a word of praise, while shortcomings and failures are sure to be noticed. What can be more unreasonable and unjust? If a man were to describe a fragrant, blushing rose-tree as consisting of thorns and leaves, or speak of the sun as a heavenly body having black spots on its surface, never mentioning the flowers of the one nor the light and warmth of the other, we should account him a lunatic. Nor can we help accounting him a moral lunatic who publishes the defects but ignores the excellencies of God's people. Let him learn to be silent. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"

"Mind your own business." But what is the great business of life? Salvation! nothing short of that. To be forgiven, to love God, to do as He wishes, to bless mankind, to be ready for eternity —this is the main thing. Oh, let us see that we "mind" it. *Business is practicable.* All can take a part in it. Some are more expert in it than others; but every one may do it. So is it spiritually. None need be lost. What does the Bible say of God? "Not willing that any should perish." In the Church of St. Clements there is a picture of Christ on the cross, from the foot of which run four rivers, which are meant to represent the four gospels, through which the water of life flows to the four quarters of the

globe. Jesus died for all. As regards the kingdom of heaven, the lines often sung are grandly true,—

"None are excluded thence,
But those who do themselves excuse."

Pardon may be had by all who, forsaking their evil courses, seek it.

This reminds us of another thought: *business requires personal effort.* If a man is to get on in the shop or warehouse, he must work. Activity is necessary. There must be individual endeavour. Nor is it otherwise as regards salvation. Christ has done the great work. He has made an atonement for sin. "By his stripes we are healed." Nevertheless, if we are to reap the benefit of His sacrifice, we must trust and pray. Some unconverted persons tell us that they can do nothing; that they must wait till a miracle is wrought in them. Perhaps the Holy Spirit will one day force them to turn to Christ and lead a better life. If so, all will be well. If not, why, they cannot help it. Thus they reason. But does this seem rational and probable? Is it likely? Can we believe that man is a mere machine, without choice or responsibility? Does the Supreme Being treat us as if we were stocks or stones? It cannot be. Those who speak in the way which we have described deceive themselves. Their language is a mere excuse, a poor and empty apology for continuing in sin. The Bible plainly teaches us that sinners are not any longer to live in their sins. God strives with them by His Holy Spirit, and they are guilty if they resist His influences. Reader, do not delude yourself! The Scriptures tell us to shake off indifference, and seek the Lord. "Look unto me;" "Repent ye;" "Be converted;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus;" "Turn ye, turn ye;"—do passages like these teach that we are to continue inactive and listless? No; we must arouse ourselves. *If you do not ask for pardon, you will never get it.* Suppose a person were to sit down and say: "All food comes from God. He only can sustain existence. Therefore, I will labour no more." Would he not starve? And if anyone talks in the same style about the Bread of Life, he will surely perish.

Business is profitable. By it men obtain their livelihood. Commerce is seldom engaged in for the mere love of it. And "Godliness is profitable unto all things." "It is profitable that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." There is no joy like that which springs from the cross. A sense of pardon gives deeper peace than the largest worldly gain can afford. When we affectionately and humbly do the will of God, we find out how true are the words: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

CHRIST'S THOUGHTS ON THOSE WHO ARE NOT HIS DISCIPLES.

WHAT Christ Himself says about the man who is not with Him cannot but move the rejoicing in Jesus to win souls and the unconverted to turn to Him. It is not much that He does say, but it is very plain, strong, and sad.

He is depressed and downhearted, needing the glad tidings of great joy; guilty, needing pardon; under condemnation, needing to be saved. He is so radically wrong that nothing short of birth again, life from death (and this not of man but of the Holy Ghost), can fully restore him. He walks in the dark and turns from the very light which would guide him. He labours and is heavy laden, lacking wisdom and rest. He treads the broad road to destruction; throws stumbling-blocks in the path of others; builds his house upon the sand; and though his barns be crammed, turns out a fool because he is not rich towards God. His heart is sown with good corn; some the devil pecks up, some trials scorch, and some is choked by poverty or wealth. He is a tree with nothing but leaves, cumbering the ground, withering to the roots; tare amongst wheat, and soft bad fish to be flung back into the sea. He is a peevish child, not to be won by smiles or tears; an unprofitable servant, to be turned out of doors; an insolent guest, to be expelled from the marriage feast; and a silly body, with a lamp but with no oil till "too late." He is a lost coin, a stray lamb, a wild, wasteful lad. He grows worse instead of better; eight demons take the place of one. He does not know what makes for his peace. He is the object of the Redeemer's tears, the reason of His suffering, the hope of His cross; yet He will not come unto Him that He may have life.

These wretched conditions are not future and distant; they are present, actual, now; he *is* dead, he *is* blind, he *is* lost, the wrath of God *is abiding* on him. But Christ is equal to the emergency. He is come to seek and to save that which is lost. He that believeth on the Son *hath* life.

There is scarcely one (if indeed there be even one) of these strong sad words from Christ's lips, but there fell from Him also stronger words of cheer and hope. As the nipping frosts of a clear winter's morning are followed by the glowing warmth of noon, brushing the hoary rime from the open spaces, so the Saviour's words of warning are followed by words of love and mercy. "Woe unto thee," may ring its dirge through more than a single verse, but quick upon it follows the eager invitation—"Come unto Me," "Learn of Me." These words, so full of sadness, are not uttered by Jesus in a hard, stern, repellent tone, but with warm and tremulous entreaty. These

hard lines are never written against a man but (and if the man will) Christ can erase them and write his name in the Lamb's Book of Life. This happy lot can be attained directly, instantly, now. "All things are ready." Christ has finished the work given Him. The call of His love is spoken to everybody. Each may respond at once. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

THE EGYPTIAN WATER-CARRIER.

"The gift of God! the gift of God!
Who will buy the gift of God?"

SUCH is the cry of the picturesque-looking water-carrier as he goes about the streets of Egypt, with his water-skin thrown over his shoulder, during the season of drought, when the water, from its preciousness, may well be called, as it is, the gift of God; for, in their language, the two terms are used interchangeably to express the one thing—the gift of God meaning water, and water being the gift of God. During the heat, and before the Nile has overflowed its banks, the poor especially would realise how valuable a thing it was when given in abundance, and recognize it emphatically as the "good gift" which "cometh down from above."

As the water-carrier goes along his way—now coming into a wealthy part of the town—a rich man, thinking of the need of the poor, and wishing to bestow a kindness on them, steps out of his mansion, and pays the man for all the water he has, desiring him to go into the poorest quarter and give it away.

The man gladly hastens off, and reaches a lane where the poorest have their dwellings, and now alters his cry, and, instead of saying,—

"Who will *buy* the gift of God?" he cries out—

"The gift of God, the gift of God,
Who will *take* the gift of God?"

We can imagine how eagerly and gladly the poor thirsty ones gather around him, and that there would not be much delay before the empty vessels were brought out of their houses to be filled. "Give me a drop!" "Remember me!" "Fill up my pitcher!" "Let me have a draught!" and such like eager appeals, in beseeching tones, would make the water-carrier think how best he could dispose of the precious liquid; and, while gladdening him to be the bearer of so free and prized a gift, it would go to his very heart that he had not enough for all.

What a grand picture we have here of "the water of life," which is offered "without money and without price" to every one that thirsteth! "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). Jesus, "our rich man," has paid for the water for which our souls were dying for thirst; and as we have "no money," it would be a hopeless case, indeed, for us, if Jesus, in His love and in His pity, had not thought of our need, and stepped out of His glorious mansion above, not only to purchase it for us, but actually to bring it with His own hands to our parched lips.

But with our Jesus there is enough and to spare. The fountain of His grace never fails—the stream of His grace is never dried up—no one need be afraid of being sent empty away, for "every one" is invited; and it will never be exhausted till the last poor thirsty sinner, who has felt His need, has come for an unfailing supply of the gift of God. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John iv. 10). "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (ver. 14).

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream,
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

'Tis religion that can give,
Sweetest pleasures while we live
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.

After death, its joys will be
Lasting as eternity:
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

A SUNDAY-SCHOLAR'S STORY.

It was all through the library book, and I know I shall keep on loving that book better than all the books in the world—except, you know, of course, the Bible.

I am sure I never thought, when teacher said to me that Sunday afternoon, "I think this is the sort of book that you will like to read," that I should like it as much as I do. But I had better tell you all about it—I mean all about what came of the loan of the library book, and how miserable I was, and how happy I am; because if I don't tell you all about it, you will think it so strange that I should like one library book more than another.

And now, if you please, I will tell you all about it. I live at home with my mother; father's an engineer, and helping to make a railway in a foreign land a long way off. I have two sisters. Sarah is three years older than I am, and she's been in a place for a good while, and is getting to be quite a woman. Pattie is younger than I am, and we two are at home with mother.

Pattie and I go to Sunday-school, when mother will let us. We like it so much, that we would sooner lose our breakfast, and our dinner too, than miss going to school. But mother would not always let us go; she did not care about it, and was sometimes very cross if she saw us hurrying. Mother used to say she did not see that we got any good by going to Sunday-school; reading and writing were useful, and these we got at day-school; but what we got at Sunday-school, except ideas that made us very dull, and filled us with notions of things about which we knew nothing at all, she could not tell. Sometimes mother would not let us go for three or four Sundays. Very often, when we went into class, teacher would say to us,—

"I have not seen you for so long, that I meant to come round; I feared you were ill."

Now we never wanted teacher to come round, because mother said she would not allow it, and we knew she would not be treated quite civilly. Sometimes we went home to tea with Jessie Naylor; and though we liked to go, it used to make us very sad. Jessie's home is so comfortable; her father and mother and Tom—that is her brother—are all so good. They read the Bible, and pray, and sing every morning and every evening; they have such good books, and talk so pleasantly about God, and heaven, and Jesus Christ, that it makes you happy to be with them. Jessie tells on Sunday all she

has heard, and her father or mother, or Tom, teach her the hymns and texts she has to learn, and help her along famously. You never hear a cross word in that house or see an unkind look. Now our home was not like this at all.

Pattie and I prayed before we went to bed, and when we got up in the morning, and we read a little in the Bible sometimes; but we dared not let mother know: she would have been angry.

Sometimes I wake up in the night now, and wonder whether it is true that things have changed; and when I feel sure it is true, I feel more thankful than I have words to tell.

One Sunday afternoon in our class, teacher was giving out the library books. "Well," teacher said to me, "I think this is the sort of book you would like to read," and gave me the library book about which I am telling you.

I took the book home, and mother took no notice of us at first; she was getting the tea ready. We helped her as well as we could, and, when tea was over, asked whether we might read our book.

"What book have you there?" she asked me.

I said, "It is a library book, mother; will you like to look at it?"

"It is not the sort of book I care for; I am sure of that," she said; "but let me see it; looking can do no harm."

I gave her the book, and directly she opened it her face turned as white as a sheet, then flushed as red as a fire; then the tears started to her eyes. I was frightened, and cried out,—

"Mother, dear, what is the matter?"

"Nothing," she said, in a softer tone than was usual with her; "nothing."

"Are you ill?"

"No," she said, "no, not ill; but you must not ask me any questions," and then she got up and went away upstairs, and took the book with her.

Of course Pattie and I were very much surprised at what had happened, and could not understand it at all. We were sure mother could not have been crying at the story, because she had only read the name of it. So we sat down and waited, and read out of the Testament to each other for about an hour. When we had finished reading, we got out our hymn-books to learn our hymn for the next Sunday. It was that hymn, which I daresay you know very well, ending with the words,—

"Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Mother came in while we were repeating it, and she stood and

looked at us kindly, but did not speak a word. She still held the library book in her hand.

"Mother," we asked, "are you better now?"

"I don't know," she answered very sorrowfully; "I wish I were. Say that hymn over again."

So we said it again, and she stood still and listened, softly repeating to herself, "Just as I am, just as I am." When we finished she said,—

"I dare say you are surprised at me; but I hope that we shall be better and happier. You have been taught to love the Saviour, and I —I hope to love Him. When I was twelve years old, my sister died in a consumption, and she often talked to me of holy things. When she was dying, she divided what she had amongst us, and gave me a copy of this book. I read it—read it over and over again when she was dead, and thought I should be religious, as she had been, and go to her in heaven at last; but I grew giddy, careless, forgetful; I forsook religion altogether. You know I have cared little for it till now."

We did not know what to say, and mother went on,—

"What became of my sister's gift I don't know. I have not seen it or thought of it for twenty years; but this library book is a copy of the same, and it seemed to me when I saw it that the voice of my dead sister called to me, and bid me come to Jesus—just as I am!"

Well, mother has been so different since. Our home is now so happy. I know father will be delighted when he comes home; he knows all about it; mother wrote and told him, and he answered so cheerfully, that we know he will be pleased. So now we go to chapel together, and teacher comes to see us, and our home is just as happy as Jessie's, except that father is not with us yet; but we are expecting him soon, and we pray that God will bring him home safe, and give us His blessing. Well, this is the story; and if you feel as I feel you would say as I say,—"*Thank God for the library book!*"

AN ESCAPE.

Francis lived in a town in England, on the edge of a great wood. One particular Saturday in summer he went to the wood with a basket, which he promised his little sister Mary to bring back full of wild strawberries.

When the basket was full, and he had eaten a few strawberries himself, he took out a story-book and began to read. The story amused him so much, that he never noticed that the clouds had

gathered over the blue sky till two or three great drops of rain fell on his hand. Then he jumped up, and thrusting the book into his pocket, ran as hard as he could toward home.

The rain fell heavily, and soon there came peals of thunder, which seemed to be just over the little boy's head. A good deal frightened, he crept to an old hollow oak, and squeezed himself inside. Once there he thought he would wait till the storm ceased; and so he made himself as comfortable as he could in the narrow hollow.

He had been there hardly five minutes when he heard his name called:

"Francis, Francis! come—come here—quick!"

In a moment he sprang out from his shelter, and set off in the direction from which the voice came. He had only gone a few steps, when there came a louder clap of thunder, a more dazzling flash of lightning, followed by a crack just behind him. Much terrified, he looked back, and saw the oak all blackened and split, and no trace of the basket, which he now remembered he had left hanging on a twig.

"What would have become of me if I had staid there?" thought he, hurrying on.

At a turning of the wood he saw a woman at the door of a cottage beckoning to him.

"Come in out of the rain," said she; "and now tell me who you are?"

"Why, you know," said the boy, as he dried himself by the fire; "you called me just now."

"No," she answered. "It wasn't you I called, but my own boy; and here he comes."

Francis told her his story, and the danger from which her call had saved him.

"You should thank God with all your heart," said the good woman, as he ended the story, "for it wasn't a chance that made me call your name just then, but God's mercy to you. Don't forget that."

"Indeed I won't," said Francis; "I hadn't thought of that."

He walked quietly home when the rain stopped, thinking more gravely than ever he thought before over all that had happened that afternoon.

When he got home, his mother and sister were watching for him.

"What did you do in the storm, Francis?" said his mother.

"Where's the basket?" said little Mary.

When he told them all that had happened to him, Mary

forgot all about the basket, and his mother could hardly speak for crying. At last she said:—

"Francis, the woman was quite right. We must all thank God with our whole hearts. And, my boy, there is another thing I should like you to think of. When you grow up and go into the world, there will be many storms; your duty may often lie in the midst of them, and you will often be tempted to stand by in the shelter and leave your duty undone. Do you remember this storm then. If you had not obeyed the woman's call, and run out of your shelter in obedience to it, what would have become of you? So you will find, when your duty calls you, though it seems to be straight out into the storm, that only in obeying the call will you be safe."

Francis is a man now. He has worked hard, and is a rich as well as a good man, and would tell you that the great help of his life has been those words of his mother. In his room hangs a cross, charred in parts. His mother had it made for him from the splintered oak-tree.

The words were said at the right moment, and Francis never forgot them; but often and often, as he grew older, they would come back to him in moments of difficulty, and he would say to himself, "Where God calls me it must be safe to go!"

THE OLD MAN OF DARTMOOR.

THERE was an old man of Dartmoor, who for many years obtained his livelihood by looking after the cattle distributed over those wild moorland hills. At last, through infirmity and old age, and the constant and unusual exposure to all kinds of weather, his sight entirely failed him, so that he had to seek an asylum in one of the West of England infirmaries to end his brief remaining days. While there he was frequently visited by one of his granddaughters, who would occasionally read to him portions of the Word of God.

One day, when this little girl was reading to him the first chapter of the first Epistle of John, when she reached the seventh verse, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," the old man raised himself and stopped the little girl, saying with great earnestness,—

"Is that there, my dear?"

"Yes, grandpa."

"Then read it to me again. I never heard the like before."

The little girl read again:

"'And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"

"You are quite sure that is there?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Then take my hand and lay my finger on the passage, for I should like to feel it."

So she took the old blind man's hand, and placed his bony finger on the verse, when he said,—

"Now read it to me again."

The little girl read, with her soft, sweet voice,—

"'And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"

"You are quite sure that is there?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Then if any one should ask how I died, tell them I died in the faith of these words,—

"'And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'"

And with that the old man withdrew his hand, his head fell softly back on the pillow, and he silently passed into the presence of Him whose "blood cleanseth us from all sin."

Varieties.

A Word in Season.—An eminent minister, on one occasion, seeing a young man in a pew uneasy, he turned towards one of the members in the gallery, and said aloud, "Brother, do you repent of coming to Christ?" "No, sir," he replied, "I never was happy till then; I only repent that I did not come to Him sooner." He then turned to the opposite gallery, and addressed himself to an aged member. "Brother, do you repent that you came to Christ?" "No, sir," said he, "I have known the Lord from my youth up." He then looked down upon the young man, whose attention was fully engaged, and said, "Young man, are *you* willing to come to Christ?" This unexpected address so affected him that he sat down and hid his face. The minister repeated it, "Young man, are you willing to come to Christ?" With a tremulous voice he replied, "Yes, sir." "But when, sir?" added the minister, in a solemn and loud tone. He mildly answered, "Now, sir." "Then stay," said he, "and hear the word of the Lord, 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'" At the close of the service the young man went into the vestry dissolved in tears, decided for God, and afterwards joined the church in company with his father and mother. Reader, will *you* come to Christ, and when?

BALAAM'S ASS.

Don't laugh. The Bible speaks of it. It seems an odd thing to write about. Never mind. Were it not useful, Scripture would not speak of it. Wait a little before you make fun. Beware how you sneer. Nothing that God does should be ridiculed.

"Oh, don't tell me," cries one. "You'll never make me believe the story. Tell it to women and children, if you like, but not to men. We can't take it in. An ass speak! The thing is impossible." No; it is not. "With God all things are possible." Is He omnipotent? If so, He can, if He likes, cause a beast to speak as easily as a human being. There are no difficulties with Him. Therefore, let it never be said that such a thing will not happen. An ass not speak! Forgive us, reader, but we are irresistibly tempted to remark that the circumstance is not unfrequently repeated now; the only difference between the ancient and modern beast being that now the creature has but two legs.

"Very good," says another. "All this I steadfastly believe; nevertheless, I doubt the story. Of course, God could make an ass speak, but I don't think that He would. There is a wide difference between what He is able and what He is willing to do. The whole affair would be quite unworthy of Him; altogether beneath the dignity of a divine Being." We cannot see that at all. Depend upon it, the Lord of men thinks more of their good than of His own fame. *We* are continually asking how we shall look, and wondering what impression we shall create, if we do such and such things. With the Most High it is different. His one end is to save mankind, and He will always use such means as are most effectual. Have you never read of One who "made Himself of no reputation"?

Some refuse to accept the narrative in question because it is opposed to experience. Years ago we heard an infidel lecturer in Nottingham talk very confidently and glibly about this: "If a man told you that a donkey had gone into your market-place and spoken, should you think he was speaking the truth?" "No!" exclaimed a chorus of voices. We were quite willing that they should exclaim thus. We could add our "no" with equal readiness. Such a statement could not be believed now, because there are no miracles now. But does it follow that because it does not happen now, therefore it never has happened? Does it? He who assents only to that which takes place in the present, will have a remarkably small creed. By all means let experience be our guide, but not our only guide, and let it be a wide experience, that of others as well as of ourselves. Hear a parable: "A fish in early summer sat at the upper end of its shell, looked down on its finny brethren below, and began to philosophize. It had never been outside the shell, but seeing that the shell was green, itself also green, and its finny com-

panions too, it came to the conclusion that the world must be green. But, as summer grew hotter, the fish-shell and its inhabitant, to their dismay, became aged and wrinkled and yellow, and now the philosophical fish, seeing that it, its fellows, and the shell were all yellow, came to the conclusion that the world was yellow!"

A few words now about the meaning of the story. *God will not let men go on in an evil course without seeking to stop them.* That is the prime lesson of the whole incident. Balaam was doing what he ought not to have done, and to hinder him God made the ass turn aside, fall down, and speak. He wished to arrest the misguided selfish fellow in his evil progress. Let us lay that to heart. The Almighty is no indifferent, careless spectator of our thoughts and deeds. Not at all. He is deeply interested in us. "God is love," and He desires us to keep from sin because it is our foe. Reader, nothing is truer than this, that all self-will, selfishness, forgetfulness of God, lead, sooner or later, here or hereafter, to shame, disappointment, and misery. Hence, our infinite Father wants us to receive His mercy through Christ, and live holy and useful lives. "Turn ye, turn ye: why will ye die?" This is His call.

Sometimes God uses singular means for our good. That an ass should speak to him was about the last thing in the world that Balaam ever imagined would take place. It was quite unparalleled. But does not the Lord now occasionally make use of strange and unlooked for methods by which to benefit human spirits? The gardener of Lady Huntingdon was convicted of sin by hearing her ladyship on the opposite side of the wall talk about Jesus. John Hardoak was aroused by a dream, in which he saw the last day, and the Judge sitting, and heard his own name called. A profane man was brought to conviction by the shocking blasphemy of a comrade. A man attended church and heard a sermon from the text, "The ox knoweth his owner," etc.: he went home unimpressed, but, crossing his back yard, an ox came up and licked his hand; it led him to salvation. How good God is! We sometimes talk of "leaving no stone unturned," and, verily, He leaves none unturned. He uses all means by which to draw us to Himself.

One other thought. *Even animals rebuke our sin.* They have a voice. What they are, and what they do, reprove us. "Behold the birds of the air," said Christ. "Don't they condemn your fears? Don't they make you ashamed of your mistrust? They are but birds, yet He who made remembers them. They neither sow nor reap, but they are fed. How much more shall ye be who do sow and reap!" Luther was once cured of deep depression by watching a little robin in mid-winter. The crowing of a cock brought Peter to repentance, reminding him of the Master's warning words. A

Welshman, who had degraded himself and his holy profession (for he was a minister) by intemperance, was brought to abandon the vile habit by reflecting on the conduct of a poor goat, which, made drunk by some besotted fools, refused ever afterwards to frequent the place when they were there.

If you turn to the proverbs of Solomon you will find, among other well-known words, these: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." The reader may not be a sluggard. We hope he is not. Bed-lying is a foolish and disgraceful habit. People fond of their pillows seldom make much out. The old maxim, "Early to bed and early to rise is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise," contains good sense. Nevertheless, while, my friend, you may not need to "go to the ant" as a pattern of early rising and industry, you may need to learn another lesson from it. You are energetic about the things of this life; how about the other? The ant lays up for the future. You have a great future age, an eternal future before you. Are you preparing for that? There must be a heavenly mind before we can enter the heavenly place. Have you it? If not, you may have. Christ will give it. Receive His love, and it will, by the the power of the Spirit, make a new creature of you. By abandoning what is wrong and asking for pardon, you may be freely, entirely forgiven. Get ready for the other world, we pray you. Resolve to be right for it by being right here and now!

THE STING OF LIFE.

"THE sting of *death* is sin," said Paul; and Christendom assents to the statement. "The sting of *life* is sin," said the late Thomas Binney, and the sermon he preached from this text, again and again brought some of his audience to their feet, while strong men groaned with terror as he told the experiences of sinful hearts.

The sting of life *is* sin. It is that which has blighted and blasted fallen humanity, it is that which blights and blasts men now. It is sin that darkens life with untold gloom, and makes the sun of joy go down at noon. It is sin that dims the eye, furrows the brow, bends the form, breaks the heart. It is sin that makes strong men weak and brave men cowardly, and which drives men from the heights of joy and honour to hide beneath refuges of lies, and creep like crawling things in mire and filth unspeakable. It is sin that blights youth, blasts manhood, and disgraces grey hairs. It is sin

that hurls down the strongest and noblest, to be a hissing and a by-word, the song of drunkards and the scoff of fools. Deep in the human heart is buried the fatal sting of sin. More fearful than exposure, than shame, than punishment, is the clanking of the unseen chain, the galling of the unseen fetter, the rankling of the unseen dart, the secret consciousness of a soul estranged from God, possessed by evil, haunted by dark and guilty recollections, and feeling —under, it may be, a fair, a prosperous, a smiling, a sanctimonious outside—its own weakness, emptiness, hollowness, and bitterness, which no human hand can help or heal.

The sting of life is sin, and that sting is fatal. The end of those things is death. Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. The wages of sin is death. Sin is the sting of death because it has been the sting of life. It drapes the future with darkness because it has clothed the present with gloom. The poison strikes deeper and deeper the farther it goes. Here it ruins reputation, health, vigour, enjoyment, intellect, and every moral excellence,—there it shall destroy both soul and body with an everlasting destruction.

Friend, the terrible mistake of your life-time, the sting of your existence is, sin. And do you still covet, and desire, and enjoy it? Are you not satisfied with what you have tasted of the wormwood and gall? Have you not felt sin's sting long enough? Are you not weary of the hidden burden, the inward conflict, the secret fetter, the deadly sting? Are you not ready to part with sin,—to sacrifice its pleasures,—if you may thus escape its pains? Are you not ready to be helped by Him who is the only healer of the sting of sin—whose blood is the only antidote to its baleful power? If so, I bid you come, and welcome, to the Lord who loves and saves the lost. To-day you may be freed from the sorrow and the sting of sin—freed through the love of Him who died upon the cross for you, and who lives to plead your cause before the throne. To-day He waits to bless, He bends to hear, He stoops to save. And shall He wait and plead in vain? Shall His voice which spake the worlds in order, and which marshals all the host of heaven, fall upon your ears like an idle tale? The sting of life is sin, and the sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God that giveth us the victory both in life and in death, through our Lord Jesus Christ "But how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Doth He who came the lost to seek,
To save the soul benighted,
Doth He entreat with earnest voice,
And shall His love be slighted?—
His call to every human heart,
To bid unholy thoughts depart,
And as its Lord receive Him?

Doth the great Saviour stand and call?
Shall we remain unheeding?
Doth He repeat his kind request?
Can we withstand the pleading?
That faithful Friend, His life who gave,
From sin's dread bonds, from death to save,
Oh, let us turn and hear Him!

REST.

CHRIST addressed himself to one of the profoundest and most commonly-felt desires of our nature when He promised us rest. Men are everywhere dissatisfied. Men are everywhere seeking for rest. Each, in the manner and to the extent consonant with his sensibilities, feels the discords of life. Each, in a like manner and to the same extent, seeks to bring harmony out of these discords. The conduct of each confirms the truth implied in the promise, that *men* are in a state of unrest, and are seeking for rest.

But the promise of Christ that He will give rest does not stop with this implication, the truth of which all will admit. It implies farther, that men are deceived in the estimate of their needs and of the possessions which will supply them. It teaches that the discontent which men feel is deeper than a simple discontent with outward circumstances: it is a discontent of the soul. Men were made in the likeness of God. They were intended for communion and fellowship with Him. Although they have long broken this relation, the soul still refuses its assent to its debasement. Its voice is still heard muttering its complaints and regrets: it can never be silenced. As the hart wearied in the chase pants for the water-brooks, so the soul pants for God. It can be fully satisfied only with Him. The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest. True rest they can find only in being again restored to God, and this restoration can take place only in Christ.

What, therefore, is this true rest which can be found only in Christ, and which alone satisfies the soul? It is best defined by noting its expression in Christ's own life. The rest which Christ promised he Himself possessed. It is said of the ocean that it is never at perfect rest: that its waves are always in motion. While this may be true of the waves on its surface, yet in its unseen depths there is perfect quiet. We may apply the figure to the life of Christ. From His entrance upon His public ministry, He met with opposition and enmity. He came to his own, and was rejected by them. Constantly there were those about Him who were questioning Him, and disputing Him: and those who were seeking to ensnare Him in

His words. The enmity thus initiated increased in its virulence as His work advanced, until it reached its height in the shameful treatment in the judgment-hall, and the still more shameful death of the cross. Besides the open enmity of His opposers, there were the mistakes and desertions of those who professed to love Him. After He had been teaching one of the most fundamental doctrines of His kingdom—the duty of deriving spiritual life only from Him—we read "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." At the time of his trial and crucifixion, when he had the greatest need of the support and sympathy of His followers, we find, that instead of receiving these, it was one of His apostles who betrayed Him; another denied Him; and of the others we read, "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled."

But while the surface of Christ's life was thus disturbed and stormy, there was a depth within it which was always quiet and in perfect rest. There was a peace which neither the cavils of His enemies, the falseness of His professed friends, nor the deeper trials of His own inner life, could reach and disturb. His faith in God never wavered. His love for men was never weakened. He never, even for a moment, faltered in His work of redemption. No words of useless anger escaped from His lips. He was never hurried into dispute or controversy. He never lost His spirit of love and forgiveness. Even while upon earth, He had within Him the peace and rest of heaven; a repose as deep and mysterious as His own divine nature, and before which we stand with the same feeling of admiration and reverence.

Of this kind is the rest which Christ offers us. It is a rest which is beyond the reach of the dissensions or attractions of this world. It is a rest which neither friend nor foe, which not even the doubts and fears of our own hearts, shall be able to disturb. It is a rest which is perfect and absolute, with God. This rest we may not enjoy fully now, nor, perhaps, at any time during our present life, but towards the complete possession of it we may be making constant advance. How we are to obtain possession of it is a theme often presented to our minds, but it has never been expressed more succinctly, or in words worthy of a more grateful remembrance than those of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

THE OLD FISHERMAN'S STORY.

A LITTLE bright-faced boy had just put a match to the kindling wood of the grate, and was watching the flame as it forced its way among the crackling coals, when, half in thought and half aloud, he said, "Who would think a little match would make so big a fire?"

"Ah, yes, my little man," said his father, "a little match, like other little things, may do great good or great harm. A good apostle once said: 'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' And now, as our fire is burning, I will tell you a story about a little match, and the good that it did.

"Far away down on the shore of the Bristol Channel stands a small fisherman's cabin. It is just far enough from the water to be out of the reach of the great waves that come rolling in from the Irish Channel; and near it is a creek, or little river, in which the fisherman used to shelter his boat. At the time of my story the man happened to have left his little cabin and gone to Tenby. It was market-day there, and as the weather was rough and wintry, he had stayed away from home. It was desolate and dreary about that little house on the cold December day of which I am speaking. A dull, leaden sky; a cold, keen blast, sweeping up clouds of sand along the shore; the moaning of the sea birds and the regular beat of the waves upon the shore, formed the total of the sights and sounds on the coast that day.

"A strong wind had been blowing for three days, and all who thought of the sailor at sea prayed God to keep him from its dangers. A good brig had just made the entrance of the channel, and was beating up towards Bristol. She had a captain, mate, and six sailors for her crew. Their voyage had been a pleasant one, and was now nearly over. They were thinking of their homes and friends when the fierce storm came on. The rigging was stiff with ice, and it was hard to handle the ropes or manage the ship. The men did their duty, as all true English sailors will do; but it was in vain. The winds and the waves and the bitter cold were too strong for them, brave as they were, and carried the poor brig steadily towards the shore. Soon they heard a sound terrible to seamen; it was the noise of the breakers. The captain called all hands about him, and raised his voice in prayer. He prayed for their safety, if God so willed it, that they might have strength to meet the fierce waves, and that if they could not be saved from shipwreck, they might be safe in the mercy of God.

The brig soon struck, and as she lay with her side to the shore, the water for a little space was so calm that the small boat was safely launched, and every man seated in it. But, alas! before they could reach the shore a great wave struck the little boat, and the poor men were cast into the sea. Four of them, with the captain, reached the land, and though scarcely able to move, dragged themselves forward to find a shelter. They raised a shout when they came in sight of the little cabin; but, alas! there was the creek between it and them. 'We must go through or die,' said the captain; and, after a great struggle, in their tired state, they reached the other side; but the brave captain could go no farther. 'Leave me, my men,' said he; 'get help for yourselves, and then come back if you can.' The men gained the house, but were horrified to find it empty. One man only took heart, as he looked at the fireplace and the wood near it. But, alas! there was neither flint nor steel to strike a light. A moment he stood in agony; but as he raised his head he saw upon the rude mantel a small box marked 'matches.' With trembling haste he seized it, and found one single little match! Here were four sailors; a little way off lay their brave captain. All their lives depended, one might say, upon that single match. If it failed all must die; for cold and hunger were fast doing their work upon the poor men. With a trembling hand, and a silent prayer, he drew the match; and as the little feeble flame broke out, 'Thank God!' burst from the men.

"They soon managed to make the wood catch first; and as the bright blaze shot up, the glare brought relief to the poor captain, who lay on the beach too weak to crawl.

"The feeling that now he should be saved helped to keep him alive. When the sailors came to where he lay he was nearly gone; but they carried him in, and gradually he revived.

"Remember how much good a thing that seems so insignificant as a match can do!"

"TAKE IT, OF COURSE!"

A poor old man lay dying, in a country village, of a lingering disease. Conscious that death was approaching, he was anxious to know how he could obtain that forgiveness of which he felt his need. Some one visited his bedside from time to time, and taught him that he must pray as long as he lived, and hope in God's mercy through Christ, but that he must not expect to know he was forgiven till the day of judgment. This was man's way of putting the Gospel before the man, but it was not the way to give the poor man peace.

A servant of the Lord, hearing of his case, went to see him, when something like the following conversation took place between them:

"How do you expect to be saved?"

"Well, sir, I keep on praying, and I hope God will have mercy on me."

"Because you pray?"

"Well, yes, sir; I cannot expect to be saved unless I do pray."

"Then prayer is to save you?"

"Why, as to that, I suppose it is Christ as must save me; but I must pray for forgiveness."

"That is you must have a hand in it. But now, if I were to hold out five shillings in my hand, and ask you to accept it, would you beg and pray of me to give it to you, or would you take it?"

"Why, take it, of course," said the poor old man, smiling at the apparent absurdity of such a question.

"'Be it known unto you, therefore . . . . that through this man, Christ Jesus, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.' God Himself offers you forgiveness. He holds it out to you, bidding you believe Him, when He declares that 'the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin.' Instead of taking what He offers, and believing His blessed word, you keep on asking Him to give you that which He has been offering to you ever since you were a child. He bids you look to Christ—you look to prayer. He declares to you forgiveness through the blood of Christ—you tell Him in return you don't believe Him, for if you did you clearly would not ask Him to give that which He is offering you. Thus you make God a liar, and hope to be saved for doing so!"

The poor old man's eyes were opened; he was astonished at himself; his conscience was exercised; he saw his error in doubting God's willingness to save, and his wrong in questioning the love of Christ, who died for him, and refusing to accept the mercy that was freely offered; real conviction of sin against God followed; he believed, and was saved.

Reader, may you be led to Jesus in God's own appointed way, and that is by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ,—then you can pray to God as your Father, through the Lord Jesus, your Saviour.

DREAMING AND DOING.

Arthur Archer and Luke Linger were cousins, and were both of the same age. They went to the same day-school, and began to learn ciphering in the same quarter. Two years passed away, by

which time Arthur had finished the rule of three, and was ready to begin practice, while Luke was scarcely able to work a sum in division.

When breaking-up day came, and the half-yearly prizes were given, Arthur Archer received a nicely-bound volume of natural history; while Luke Linger was so low in good marks as not to be entitled to any reward.

"How vexing it is!" said Luke; "I *meant* to have got forward, but somehow everything is against me."

"That excuse will not do, Master Linger," said his tutor; "it is quite plain to me that you have not done your best. While others were working, you were idling away your time. You must persevere, Luke, if you intend to be a scholar. Learning will not drop into a dreamer's mouth."

Arthur and Luke had an uncle, Farmer Hodges, who invited them to spend a week at his house in their midsummer holidays. As they lived in town, they looked forward to the expected visit to the country with great delight.

Uncle Hodges was an old-fashioned farmer. He wore a red waistcoat, always rose with the lark, worked as hard as any labourer in the fields, and never was absent from his pew on Sunday, and then, too, he was a kind-hearted and truly Christian man.

On the first morning of their visit at the farm, their uncle took them into his rickyard and orchard, showed them his new barn, and pointed out the finest of his horses, cows, and sheep. He then promised that if they would get up early the next morning he would take them to Brook Meadow, where the haymakers were busy at work, and then, perhaps, for a ride to High-top Hill.

On the morrow Arthur was up and ready before the clock struck six; and was down in the farmyard, looking at the pigeons as they flew around the old elm trees, until Uncle Hodges joined him. They waited some time for Luke, but as he did not make his appearance they set off without him.

Luke lay dreaming in bed till nearly seven, and when he got up he seemed in no hurry to make his way downstairs. At length he appeared, and went out into the cross-road to see if he could find his uncle and Arthur; but before he had walked one hundred yards, he saw them on their way home, both mounted on ponies. They had first been to the hay-fields, and afterwards for a pleasant ride. Luke Linger at once saw that, by his delay, he had lost a treat, while Arthur Archer had got a good appetite for his breakfast and a fresh glow of health on his cheeks.

"*How vexed I am,* uncle!" cried Luke. "I quite *meant* to *have gone with you to the hayfields.*"

"It is all very well, Luke," said Farmer Hodges, "so far as it goes, to intend doing a thing; but a bushel of good intentions is not worth a penny unless they end in good actions."

This was not the only time during the visit that the farmer found out the failing and folly of his nephew, in wishing when he should have been acting, and dreaming when he should have been doing.

One afternoon Farmer Hodges found Arthur and Luke on a seat in the garden, talking rather loudly.

"Well, my lads," said he, "what is the matter now?"

"Why, uncle," replied Luke, "I was only saying that I wish I had a large farm of my own, with a garden and orchard, and sheep and horses, and plenty of men to do the work for me."

"Dreaming and wishing again," said the farmer; "that way won't do, Luke; you must try another. Idle wishes are like weeds, which sometimes show their heads on my land; but I root them out, or they would soon spoil my profits."

That evening, as the farmer opened his large-print Bible at family worship, he said, looking at the same time at his nephews, "If wishing and intending without doing be a bad plan for the things of this world, it is still worse for the great concerns of the world to come. 'The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing,' Prov. xiii. 4. There are thousands who mean to attend to the care of their souls before they die, while they dream away life, and at last die in their sins. That way won't do; we must try another. We must at once believe in Jesus Christ, and give Him our hearts without delay. We must to-day repent of our evil doings, and seek the grace of the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts, or we shall be in great danger of being for ever lost."

Varieties.

WHAT! REFUSE ETERNAL LIFE!—What! refuse eternal life! reject a kingdom! and in their stead take death, and shame, and weeping as thy portion?—prefer an eternity of darkness to an eternity of light! turn away from an open paradise, and choose the desolation of the everlasting wilderness! Does not all this seem incredible, impossible? Meanwhile the day is wearing on. The shadows of the night that has no morn beyond it are falling down upon you. "There is sorrow on the sea, and it cannot be quiet" (Jer. xlix. 23). The world is growing old; and the cry of its transgression is going up, like the cry of Abel's blood, demanding speedy

vengeance. That cry must soon be heard, for the sole reason of delay is the long-suffering of God, "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). What, then, are you to do, who are still unsaved and unsheltered? Will pleasure be pleasure then; or will it not be gall and wormwood? Will the world's gay glitter continue then to bewilder you? Where will be the spell of its beauty, the music of its siren song? They "are not;" and "in one hour thou art made desolate." Its blossoms have gone up as dust, and its joys are forgotten dreams. The freshness of youth has faded; the ties of kindred are broken; the gladness of companionship is at an end; the greetings of neighbourhood have ceased; the voices of home are silent; and the old familiar melodies of earth have died away. All have been "covered with a cloud" in the day of the fierce anger of the Lord! And for thee, unsaved one, there remaineth nought but the everlasting darkness which no star shall gladden, and on which no hope shall arise. The judgment seemed long in coming; thou wert hoping that it would never arrive. But it has come at last. And its coming is the final quenching of all hope to thee!—*Bonar.*

A Solemn Fact.—Our opinions, experience, and practice will have to do with us beyond the narrow limits of time. They will have an influence upon our state when time itself shall be no more. Yes, when your body shall be mouldering in the grave. Yes, when the blast of the last trump shall be heard. Yes, when all shall appear in judgment, and shall stand before the great white throne. Yes, when the final separation shall take place between the righteous and the wicked. Yes, when as many millions of years shall have passed away as there are atoms in the universe. Then your present opinions, experience, and practice will have to do with you. *Then*, if these shall be found dross, you will find yourself in hell for ever and ever! but if these are found genuine, you will find yourself happy—inexpressibly happy—in heaven. Reader, is not this a solemn fact?

An Appeal.—Poor sinner, awake; Eternity is coming, and His Son, they are both coming to judge the world; awake, art yet asleep, poor sinner? Let me set the trumpet to thine ear once again. The heavens will be shortly on a burning flame, the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up, and then wicked men shall go into perdition; dost thou hear this, sinner? Hark, again, the sweet morsels of sin will then be fled and gone, and the bitter burning fruits of them only left; what sayest thou to that, sinner? Canst thou drink hell fire? Will the wrath of God be a pleasant dish to thy taste? This must be thine everyday's meat and drink in hell, sinner."—*Bunyan.*

TRY!

It is a remarkable fact that the greatest military conquerors have been little men. Alexander was short of stature. Julius Cæsar resembled him in this respect. Napoleon Buonaparte could not boast a lofty figure. In these, and other cases that might be noticed, the body contrasted with the mind. Some words are like them. They are small, but mighty. Though diminutive, their triumphs are surprising. Take, for instance, the one that stands at the top of this page. What a victor it is! Who can reckon the difficulties which it has overcome? All history bears witness to its achievements.

Some time ago a boy lived in the north of England. He was poor. One day at school, during play-time, he did not go with the other lads to sport, but sat down under a tree by a little brook. He put his head upon his hand and began thinking. He fell into a deep study. What about? He said to himself, "How strange it is! All this land used to belong to our family. Yonder field, and that house, and all the houses round were once ours;" and he went on pointing out all as far as he could see. "Now," he thought, "we don't own any of this land. The houses are not ours. Oh! if I could but get all this property back." He then just said two words to himself, "I'll try!" He went back to school that afternoon to begin to try. He commenced by sitting down and studying his lessons hard. He had been lazy and was at the bottom of the class. He worked bravely and made up lost ground. At night, instead of amusing himself, he stuck to his lessons, and was able in the morning to repeat them with the greatest ease. His teacher was astonished. He could hardly believe what he heard and saw. The boy got to the top of the class and kept there. He was then removed to a superior school, where he did the same. By and by he entered the army, and eventually went to India as an officer. At length he rose to the highest post a man could occupy in that land, and in twenty years came back to England and bought all the property that had once belonged to his family. Such is the story of the renowned Warren Hastings.

Two men might, many years since, have been seen walking together in the streets of Gloucester. One was older than the other, and leaned on the arm of his younger companion. When they reached a certain place, the elder said, "Pause here." So saying, he uncovered his brow, closed his eyes, and stood for a moment in silent prayer. That place was the site of the first Sabbath-school. The younger man was the estimable Joseph Lancaster, the elder was Robert Raikes, the founder of the Sabbath-school. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he lingered on the spot, and said to his companion, "This is the spot on which I stood when I saw the destitu-

tion of the children and the desecration of the Sabbath by the inhabitants of the town. I asked, 'Can nothing be done?' A voice answered, 'Try!' I did try, and see what God hath wrought! I never pass the place in which the word 'try' came so powerfully into my mind, without lifting my hands and heart in gratitude to God for having put such a thought into my head."

Christ told men to try. On a certain occasion someone said to Him, "Are there few that be saved?" How did our Lord answer him? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate:" that is, try, try to be right yourself. He would not gratify the curiosity of those who are not saved. The questioner was thinking more about others than himself. He was speculating about heaven without getting ready for it. Therefore the Saviour says, "See to yourself first of all." There is a valuable lesson here. Some people puzzle and perplex themselves with difficult theological questions, but never think of their own souls. Meanwhile, they seem to forget that *they* are sinners and need conversion. What extraordinary folly! A person once asked Dr. Nettleton, "How came I by my wicked heart?" "That," he replied, "is a question which does not concern you so much as another—namely, how you should get rid of it." As the man still pressed his question, Dr. Nettleton told him that his condition resembled that of one who was drowning, while his friends were attempting to save his life. As he rises to the surface of the water, he exclaims, "How came I here?" "That question does not concern you now," says one of them; "take hold of the rope." "But how came I here?" again he asks. "I shall not stop to answer that question now," replies his friend. "Then I'll drown," says the infatuated man, and, spurning all proffered aid, sinks to the bottom.

Personal effort is needful to salvation. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," says Christ. Try to get pardon and eternal life. There is something for us to do. "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved. When the Lord wants me, He will call me. I can do nothing." This is how some argue. It is wicked and absurd. Where does the Bible teach us to talk so? It calls on us to *try*. Listen: "Ask, and it shall be given you;" "Seek ye the Lord;" "Turn ye, turn ye;" "Come unto Me." Dare anyone, with those plain and earnest passages before him, say that he must continue in unbelief until God suddenly forces him into His kingdom? We cannot forgive ourselves, but we can ask God to forgive us: we cannot regenerate ourselves, but we can pray for the Holy Spirit to renew us. Think of Peter and Paul. Mark how they spoke to men. When at Pentecost the cry was raised, "What shall we do?" Peter did not answer, "Nothing," but he said, "Repent." When the

Philippian jailor exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did not answer, "Do? you are not to do anything." No: he replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

May we quote from a remarkably useful living preacher? Mr. C. H. Spurgeon says: "The impotent man desiring to be healed, *waited* by the pool, expecting some sign and wonder. This is the thought of many. They accept the unscriptural and dangerous advice given to them by a certain class of ministers, they wait at the Pool of Bethesda, they persevere in the formal use of means and ordinances, and continue in unbelief, expecting 'some great thing.' They abide in a continual refusal to obey the gospel, yet expect that on a sudden they will experience some strange emotions, singular feelings, or remarkable impressions. But when the Lord bids you believe in Jesus, what right have you to demand signs and wonders instead? I challenge the whole world to find any gospel of God in which an unconverted man is told to abide in unbelief. Where is the sinner told to wait upon God in the use of ordinances, that so he may be saved? The gospel of our salvation is this: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' This was the gospel, and the only gospel, which Jesus Christ ever bade His ministers preach; and they who say, 'Wait for feelings, wait for impressions, wait for wonders,' preach another gospel which is not another. 'Look unto Me and be ye saved,' is God's gospel. 'Wait at the pool,' is man's gospel, and it has destroyed thousands."

My brother, there is free, full forgiveness for you if you will ask for it. God has given His Son as your ransom, and through Him He is willing to receive you. Come to Him: try. Do you say that you cannot give up your evil course? Alone you cannot, but with God's help you can: try. "He is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive." "Everyone that asketh, receiveth." Will you not ask? Try!

DEATH'S MASTER.

A CHRISTIAN woman was lately dying of internal cancer. She was attended by a Roman Catholic nurse, who was very much astonished at the calm patience and peace of the poor sufferer. A friend called to see her one day. The door was opened by the nurse.

"How is Mrs. —— to-day?" inquired my friend.

"She is very ill, sir," was the reply. The nurse then gave the

following details: "Last night she was seized with violent pain, and I thought she was dying. I said to her,—

"'You are dying; shall I send for the clergyman to prepare you for death?'

"'Oh, no,' she said, 'I want no minister, for I am ready to die at any moment.'

"'But,' I said, 'are you not afraid to die?'

"'No, indeed, not a bit,' she replied.

"'Tell me why you are not afraid to die, when you have not been prepared by your clergyman, nor received the rites of your Church,' I said.

"'Because,' she replied, joyously, 'I belong to Death's Master. I am a poor sinner saved by grace.'"

Death's Master has won His mastery by the mightiest conflict earth has known. He has come down from heaven, and yielded to the pain and anguish of dissolution; He has felt the death-damp on His brow, and the death-chill on His heart; He has bowed His head beneath the silent wave, and has been laid helpless in the gloomy tomb. Yet He liveth, He liveth though He was dead. He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again; and to-day He bears the keys of hell and of death, and controls the motions of the grim destroyer. And though death is robbing us of the nearest, the dearest, and the fairest, yet he is only hiding God's jewels until the Lord shall gather them up as gems for His crown.

Reader, do you know Death's Master? Are you acquainted with His grace, and power, and love? Are you trusting in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life? Are you looking for Him to come and rend the tomb, and bring His people home to life, and joy, and glory everlasting? Are you standing in Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and who says, "Because I live, ye shall live also"? Can you say with all the confidence of the Church of ages past, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and in the life everlasting" beyond the grave? Then you will fear no evil in the dark valley; you will sorrow not above the graves of friends as those that have no hope; you will rejoice that neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God; you will remember that whether we live or die we are the Lord's, and that our King is Death's Master and will soon be Death's Destroyer.

He shall swallow up death in victory; and that day of victory shall come ere long. Earth and ocean shall give up their slumbering hosts at His command. Then shall the parted meet, the sorrowing rejoice, and those who have suffered with Christ shall be glorified together with Him, and crown Him Lord of all.

"LEFT TO HIMSELF."

In this world it is needful not only to put things right, but to keep them right. Anything left to itself soon goes to ruin. Very often to do nothing is to do mischief. The sluggard's garden was overgrown with thorns and nettles, not because he had sown them there, but because he had neglected to root them out. "The stone wall thereof was broken down," not because he had thrown it down, but because he had allowed it to fall. It is astonishing how soon a house gets out of repair and becomes a ruin if it be shut up and neglected. The tiles drop off one by one, the timbers give way, the windows fall in, the floors decay, and in the course of a few years, a house left quite to itself is in a state of dilapidation.

It is just so, too, with human beings. The seeds of evil are already sown in the child's heart, as the weeds were in the sluggard's garden. They will spring up of themselves, and it is for us to root them up, or they will cover all the soil. The mother who lets them grow unchecked in the heart of her little one, will bring the child to ruin, and herself to shame.

A few months ago there was a sad case of this kind before one of the London police courts. A poor woman applied to the magistrates for protection against her own son. Her husband, a small tradesman, had died some years before, leaving her with one child. She loved the little one with all the love of a widow for her first-born—her only child. She could not bear to check or thwart him in anything he wished. He grew up an obstinate, self-willed boy. His poor mother would not believe the complaints the neighbours all made of him. Love blinded her to his faults, and she would willingly have worked herself to death, if she could thereby have given him pleasure. His evil habits grew upon him, and bad companions led him further astray. The poor woman now perceived the mistake she had made. But she could not find it in her heart to punish him, and she continued to supply him with money from her own hard earnings, which he spent in sin and folly. His course was still downward. When the unhappy woman was unable to provide him with the means for self-indulgence, he began to plunder the little shop which she kept. Her poor lodging was, little by little, stripped of its few articles of furniture, which he pawned or sold to raise money. As he grew more hardened and reckless, she suffered such violence and cruelty at his hands that she was compelled to seek protection from him; and the bitterest grief of all was, to know that her own mistaken fondness had been the cause of his ruin and her own.

I was crossing the churchyard of ———, when I observed a

coffin, borne by four men, approaching the door of the church. A single mourner followed. Her loud sobs and solitary appearance deeply affected me, and I paused by the side of one of the old elm trees. Several of the villagers uncovered their heads and respectfully bowed as the weeping woman passed. An old man of threescore years and ten was amongst the group, and from him I soon found that the mourner was a mother—a widowed mother—and that she was following her only son to his premature grave. "He was as fine a lad as ever lived, sir," said the old man; his mother was left a widow when he was only a few years old. She was one of the kindest creatures ever born. She was too kind to him. She never would cross him in anything. Before he was twenty, he had got some of the worst Sabbath-breaking companions in the place. Many and many a night has his poor mother sat up till midnight, when he has been carried home from the public-house by his drunken comrades. Lately, he treated her more cruelly, but like a mother she bore it, as none but a mother could. He would bear no restraint. Last week, poor fellow, after drinking very hard, he had, for the third time, an attack of delirium tremens, and he died in an awful state. Ah, sir, I have seen many broken-hearted parents lay their ungodly children in this churchyard. I always say with Solomon to young fathers and mothers, 'Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.' I am an old man now, and have observed during my long life that those children who have been pampered at home, and always allowed to have their own way, have generally turned out to be bad, ungrateful children, and in many, many cases, have filled, like this poor widow's son, a drunkard's grave."

Reader, the responsibility of educating your children is one you cannot escape. It is a task imposed upon you by Divine Providence, and you may look to Him with confidence for guidance and aid. In short, you must educate your child, whether you choose it or not; for every action, every word and look, the very tone of your voice, and the round of ordinary daily events, will influence him far more than the occasional lessons he receives, however excellent. "As the mother, so the daughter." The Bible lays down four great rules, involving the four great elements of the successful religious training of children—prayer, instruction, example, and restraint. And it is doubted if a solitary case can be found, where all these have been united, where the child has not followed in the footsteps of the pious parent; while, on the other hand, if but only one of the four has been neglected, it may have been the ruin of the child.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

THE STORM AT SEA.

"MOTHER, you will let me go?"

A terrible storm was sweeping along the wild coast of North Devonshire. The Dynmouth life-boat is prepared to make its way to a foreign vessel which, at some short distance from the land, is showing signs of dire distress. The life-boat crew is complete, with the exception of one man. Young Will Carew, a Dynmouth fisher-lad and an expert sailor, is offering to fill the vacant place. At first he bends down gently to a woman, who stands beside him on the dreary shore, and it is his clear, brave voice that we hear in the raging of the storm.

"Mother, you will let me go?"

The mother has been a widow only six months. Her husband was a fisherman; he put out one bright day last spring, for the last time, in a fishing-boat, upon a delusively calm sea. A sudden squall came on; broken fragments of the boat were seen next morning on the beach, but the fisherman returned no more to home and love. And now the son asks permission to brave the horrors of the sea, which his father found so pitiless.

A fierce, passionate refusal rises to the woman's lips. But her sad eyes move slowly toward the distressed vessel; she thinks of the many loved lives in jeopardy within it; thinks, with a sudden pang of agonised pity, of many distant, dear homes in peril of bereavement. She turns to the boy, and her voice is calm and courageous as his own:—

"Go, my son. And may God Almighty go with you, and bring you back safe to your mother's heart."

Hurriedly she leaves the beach; hurriedly seeks her desolate home, and alone she wrestles with the pain of her old sorrow and her new fear.

Morning dawns again. The storm has spent itself. Sullenly the waves are tossing their haughty heads, but the sea's worst fury is over at last. A gallant vessel has gone down upon the waters, but the Dynmouth life-boat has nobly fulfilled its noble task, and all hands on board the vessel have been saved.

Why does young Will Carew linger in hesitation outside his mother's door? Bravest of the brave he has shown himself throughout the night: why does he shrink from the proud welcome that awaits him from the heart nearest to his own?

Beside him stands a tall, worn man—a man whom he has rescued

from a watery grave; a man whose eyes, full of tenderness, never leave his own. Around the two throng Dynmouth villagers; many hands are thrust towards the man in happy recognition.

"Who will dare to tell her?" So speaks a voice well-nigh choked with emotion.

"I will." And Will Carew makes his way through the crowd. Another moment and he is in his mother's arms. He feels now for the first time the whole depth of that wondrous maternal love which Love Omnipotent has chosen as its best earthly token.

"Mother, listen. I have a tale for your ears. May God teach me how to tell it right! One of the men saved last night was a Dynmouth fisherman." The boy's voice is soft and grave, but it is evident that he steadies it only with a strong effort. "A fearful storm had overtaken him upon the sea, one day not many months ago. He was observed and saved by a foreign vessel. The vessel was outward bound. Away from home, from wife, from kindred, the man was forced to sail; and by wife and kindred he was mourned as dead. He arrived at the vessel's destined port, only to set sail again with the first ship bound for England. Last night he found himself within sight of home; but a wild storm was raging on land and sea, and once more the man stood face to face with a terrible death. Help came in his need; help God-sent, God-directed. And——"

The boy breaks down now. On his knees, by his mother's feet, he clasps her hands convulsively in his, and his voice comes only through his thick sobs: "Mother, darling, try to bear the happy truth. When your brave heart—a heart which, in the midst of its own sorrow, could feel for the sorrow of others, sent me forth last night to the succour of the distressed—you knew not—how should you know?—that you sent me to the rescue of my dear father's life. God gave him to me. God has given him, mother, back to our grateful love."

Not another word is spoken. Locked in each other's arms, mother and son pour out their hearts in a flood of unspeakably happy tears.

A step is heard; the rescued man stands by his own fireside, remembering, with deep emotion, that his place there has been won for him by the skill and courage of his son.

With a cry of wild joy, the mother rushes forward, and her head finds its long-lost place upon her husband's breast.

Ah! Love, supreme, unutterable! Strange, indeed, are the paths through which thy Divine wisdom leads thy children to happiness! In mute reverence we bow before the mighty Tenderness which crowns and blesses earthly love!

THE ORPHAN BOY.

The bustle of the fight was over; the prisoners had been secured, and the decks washed down, the watch piped, and the schooner had once more relapsed into midnight quiet and repose. I sought my hammock, and soon fell asleep. But my slumbers were disturbed by wild dreams, which, like the visions of a fever, agitated and unnerved me; the last strife, the hardships of my early life, and a thousand other things, mingled together as figures in a phantasmagoria. Suddenly a hand was laid on my shoulder, and, starting up, I beheld the surgeon's mate.

"Little Dick, sir, is dying," he said.

At once I sprang from my hammock. Little Dick was a sort of protégé of mine. He was a pale, delicate child, said to be an orphan and used to gentle nurture; and, from the first hour I joined the schooner, my heart yearned towards him, for I, too, had once been friendless and alone in the world. He had often talked in confidence of his mother, whose memory he regarded with holy reverence, while to the other boys of the ship he had little to say; for they were rude and coarse, he delicate and sensitive. Often, when they jeered him for his melancholy, he would go apart by himself and weep. He never complained of his lot, though his companions imposed on him continually. Poor lad! his heart was in his grave with his lost parents.

I took a strange interest in him, and had lightened his task as much as possible. During the late fight I had owed my life to him, for he rushed in just as a sabre-stroke was levelled at me, and by interposing his feeble cutlass had averted the deadly blow. In the hurry and confusion since, I had quite forgotten to inquire whether he was hurt, though, at the time, I had inwardly resolved to exert all my little influence to procure him a midshipman's warrant in requital for his service. It was with a pang of reproachful agony, therefore, that I leaped to my feet.

"I fear, sir," said the messenger, shaking his head sadly, "that he cannot live till morning."

"And I have been lying idle here!" I exclaimed, with remorse. "Lead me to him."

"He is delirious, but at the intervals of lunacy he asks for you, sir."

And as the man spoke, we stood beside the bed of the boy.

The sufferer did not lie in his hammock, as it was hung in the very midst of the crew, and the close air around it was so stifling; but he had been carried under the open hatchway, and laid there in a little open space of about four feet square. From the sound of the ripples,

I judged the vessel was in motion, while the clear, calm blue sky, seen through the opening overhead, and dotted with myriads of stars, betokened that the fog had broken away. How calmly it smiled down on the wan face of the dying boy. Occasionally a light current of wind —oh, how deliciously cool in that pent-up hold—eddied down the hatchway, and lifted the dark chestnut locks of the sufferer, as, with his head reposing on the lap of an old veteran, he lay in an unquiet slumber. His shirt collar was unbuttoned, and his childish bosom, as white as that of a girl, was open and exposed. He breathed quick and heavily. The wound, of which he was dying, had been intensely painful, but within the last half-hour had somewhat lulled, though even now his thin fingers tightly grasped the bed-clothes, as if he suffered the greatest agony.

A battle-stained and grey-haired seaman stood beside him, holding a dull lantern in his hand, and gazing sorrowfully down upon the sufferer. The surgeon knelt with his finger on the boy's pulse. As I approached they all looked up. The veteran who held him shook his head, and tears gathered in his eyes.

The surgeon said—"He is going fast, poor little fellow. Do you see this?" As he spoke, he lifted up a rich gold locket, which had lain upon the boy's breast. "He has seen better days."

I could not answer, for my heart was full. Here was the being to whom, a few hours before, I had owed my life—a poor, slight, unprotected child—lying before me, with death already written on his brow, and yet I had never sought him out after the conflict. How bitterly my heart reproached me at that hour! They noticed my agitation, and his old friend, the seaman that held his head, said sadly—

"Poor little Dick—you'll never see the shore you have wished for so long. But there'll be more than one, when your log's out,"—he spoke with emotion,—"to mourn over you."

Suddenly the little fellow opened his eyes, and looked vacantly around.

"Has he come yet?" he asked in a low voice. "Why don't he come?"

"I am here," said I, taking the boy's hand. "Don't you know me, Dick?"

He smiled faintly in my face. He then said—

"You have been kind to me, sir—kinder than most people are to a poor orphan boy. I have no way to show my gratitude—unless you will take the Bible you will find in my trunk. It's a small offering, I know, but it's all I have."

I burst into tears.

"Doctor, I am dying, ain't I?" said the little fellow, "for my sight grows dim. God bless you, Mr. Danforth!"

"Can I do nothing for you, Dick?" I said. "You saved my life: I would coin my blood to buy yours."

"I have nothing to ask—I don't want to live—only, if it's possible, let me be buried by my mother—you will find the name of the place and all about it in my trunk."

"Anything, everything, my poor lad," I answered chokingly.

The little fellow smiled faintly—it was like an angel's smile—but he did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the stars flickering in that patch of blue sky overhead.

"It's a long, long way to the stars up there; but there are bright angels among them. Mother used to say that I would meet her there. How near they come; and I see sweet faces smiling on me from among them. Hark! is that music?"

And, lifting his finger, he seemed listening for a moment. He fell back, and the old veteran burst into tears. The child was dead! Did he, indeed, hear angels' voices?

God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sak

"WHOSOEVER!"

A SOLDIER who had lived quite a long life in sin, lay on a hospital cot, sick and full of trouble. A kind nurse stood near, who, seeing his patient very restless, asked what he could do to make him feel better.

"I don't know; I want something," answered the sick man. "I feel dreadfully."

The nurse brought a cup of water, saying, "Wouldn't you like a drink?"

The soldier took the cup in his trembling hand, but said, "No, this isn't what I want; it isn't like this."

"It is almost time for the surgeon to come in," said the nurse kindly.

"Well, he can't do much for me," sighed the poor man; "it ain't such help that I want. Oh, I'm a dreadful wicked man; and the way is all dark before me—all dark."

The nurse was a Christian; and by this time he had discovered what was the matter with his patient; so he sat down beside him, and asked if he wouldn't like to hear what the Bible has to say to wicked men who want something the surgeon and the nurse cannot give.

"Oh, yes," moaned the sick man, "that's it; but I'm afraid there is no use in it. It's a long time since I've had anything to do with the Bible, and I'm the greatest sinner in the world; and it's all dark ahead—all dark!"

"But listen to what Jesus says," said the nurse; and he opened at the third chapter of St. John's gospel. The man listened until he had finished the sixteenth verse: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Stop," said he; "read that again."

The nurse repeated the verse.

"But what does that 'whosoever' mean?" the sick man eagerly inquired.

"It means," said the nurse, "everybody."

"No, not everybody; not such a sinner as me?" he interrupted again.

"Yes."

"And so vile and hardened?"

"It is just such that Jesus came to save."

"And sick, and wretched, and dark?"

"The very one, exactly. There is nobody so wicked, or so low, or so miserable, but that he can have Jesus if he wants Him, and be saved. Christ belongs to the poorest, and the vilest, and the sickest, most, because they need Him most. Whosoever, let him be whom he may."

"Read it once more!" and the sick man looked into the nurse's face as if he were grasping the last hope. "'Whosoever believeth,' then it means me!" he exclaimed, and his face grew calm and bright with a new trust.

"Whosoever; yes, anybody, black or white, wise or unlearned, rich or poor, happy and vigorous or miserable and nigh unto death —anybody, on condition of faith, hope, and submission."

The sick soldier, we trust, believed at the eleventh hour; for as he lay on his cot day after day, these precious words of the Saviour were often on his lips, his soul's hope and comfort as he went down to death.

GARDENS.

HAPPY is the man who has a garden. It is a source of great pleasure. No wonder that rich people should spend much on them. They are worth the money and labour which they cost. Everybody likes them. We are always glad when we see a plot of ground possessed by the poor. It not only helps to feed the body but the mind also. There is a peculiar satisfaction in plucking flowers reared by ourselves. Our home-grown fruits and vegetables seem nicer than any other. Sir William Temple says: "As gardening has been the inclination of kings and the choice of philosophers, so it has been the common favourite of public and private men; a pleasure of the greatest, and the care of the meanest; and, indeed, an employment and possession for which no man is too high nor too low." We can hardly be surprised at the praise bestowed on this pursuit by the poet Cowley:

> "When Epicurus to the world had taught
> That pleasure was the chiefest good
> (And was perhaps in the right, if rightly understood),
> His life he to his doctrines brought,
> And in a garden's shade that sovereign pleasure sought;
> Whoever a *true* epicure would be
> May there find cheap and virtuous luxury."

It is our own fault if we do not learn something from flowers. For instance. Do they not show how much may be done by culture? Take a few roses in your hand, and as you look at them remember how they came into their present condition of beauty. What a variety there is! White, pink, damask, yellow, moss, and who shall say how many besides? Yet their origin is very humble. They are the offspring of those that grow wild. It is man's patient and industrious ingenuity which has improved the dog-rose of the hedge into the lovely flower which thus adorns his garden. So with fruit. The sour sloe is parent of the luscious plum. Apples originated in the acid crab. Plants, too, that engage the toil and assist in satisfying the appetites of millions are, in their native state, valueless. Cultivation has done all. Think, morever, of our native land. Busy cities, harbours full of ships, fields covered with pasture or corn, streams turning thousands of mills, present themselves on every side. What was it at one time? A huge forest. Again we say, behold the triumphs of culture! Call to mind our ancestor, the ancient Briton: his body daubed with paint and clay, his hand flourishing a big war-club, his home a mere hole or hut—he cuts a poor figure. Contrast him with Newton mapping out the heavens, Watt binding fire and water as slaves to our chariots, Franklin bringing lightning from the the clouds, or Shakespeare "holding the mirror up to nature." How

vast the difference! The marvellous transformation is mainly the work of culture.

There is an impressive teaching in all this. If painstaking and patience are able to do so much as regards the secular, what may they not accomplish in reference to the spiritual? Indeed, we have better reason for expecting that we may become good than that we shall become healthy, wealthy, or learned. Why? Because God's special blessing is promised to the former. The Bible is full of encouragements. Again and again it assures us that, earnestly sought, divine aid will be given to those who try to live rightly. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me;" "He giveth power to the faint;" "All things are possible to him that believeth;" "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." My reader, we are very prone to make excuses. We are often guilty of apologising for wrong-doing. "Temptation," we say, "is too hard to overcome. The evil tendencies within us cannot be checked. It is useless attempting to live a holy life." Such talk is false and cowardly. Our very flowers rebuke us. They show the possibility of improvement. Away with all idle pretences! The Saviour is stronger than Satan. Only let us look to Christ, and His love will impart a power equal to our difficulties.

To quote from Henry Ward Beecher: "If any child of yours should reason about a thing that was worth having as you reason about religion, you might reason with the child, but you would accompany your reasoning, I think, with the cure for folly which Solomon exhorts to! If your child says to you, 'My father, I have been thinking of this matter of education of which you talked to me, telling me that I must be a philosopher, or an artist, or something of that sort. I have calculated the chances; and I am so surrounded with jolly young fellows—my companions are such, I so like to do tricks, it is so pleasant to have my freedom, and I am so much in doubt about this whole matter of education, that, after looking at my faculties and passions, I am satisfied I never can do anything; and I rather doubt whether there is any such thing as education; anyhow—' If your child should talk in that way would you not answer him across your knee? And yet, is he doing anything but that which you do when you are called to godliness, virtue, truth, and love? If there be a fact in God's created world, this is a fact—that when the proclamation of the gospel which is, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself,' is made in your ears, you turn round and say, 'What is love?' Is it possible that a man can love and that his character can be moulded on such a basis? Do not you urge all these vain reasons? Do not

you imitate the child? And is it not true that many of the chastisements which you receive at the hand of God are God's dealing with you as with sons? There is no teacher that would permit a pupil to make the same excuse at school. You would call him a dullard, and you would find motives to bring him to study. No parent that loves his child would permit him to reason on the subject of education as you permit yourself to reason in respect to God."

Again: Gardens remind us of the importance of watchfulness and diligence. Without constant attention they soon get into a very forlorn state. "Ill weeds grow apace;" they shoot up much sooner than flowers; they are often hard to kill. Our souls are like gardens. Evil springs up in them more readily than good. Well may sin be spoken of as "easily besetting." Bad habit is so powerful that nothing but earnest prayer and zealous effort will conquer it. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Not seldom vices which we thought we had slain have only been wounded. Under favourable circumstances they rise and reassert themselves. When Peter was accused of being a follower of Christ he denied it with oaths and curses. Here, doubtless, was a bygone practice revived. He had been a Galilean fisherman, a class notorious in our Lord's day for slang and profanity. The evil tendency had, under the Master's influence, been kept in abeyance, but now, under unusual provocation, it burst forth anew. At the beginning of Christ's ministry He cleansed the Temple, driving out the drovers and money-changers: but they returned. He had to repeat the deed towards the end of His course. Well may the Saviour say, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Let us keep His advice in mind.

Gardens are connected with the most important events that have transpired in our world. Where did man fall? In the Garden of Eden. Where did Christ agonise? In the Garden of Gethsemane. Where did He rise from the dead? In a garden. Dear reader, how do you stand affected by these great occurrences? Do you humbly acknowledge your sinfulness as a son of Adam? Are you reaping the grand benefits of the Saviour's resurrection? Do so. The Redeemer has received "gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also." Yes, for the "rebellious" He has the "gifts" of pardon and salvation. Only apply to Him, acknowledging your transgressions, and praying for mercy, and it shall be yours. Nothing gives Him more joy than to save. Yield Him that holy pleasure. Become His disciple, and soon you shall experience the delights of a better garden than earth can boast, even the Paradise of God.

THE INIMITABLE PARABLE.

THE LOST SON.

Oh, thou Prince of Teachers, who ever spoke like thee? A hundred times have I read this parable of thine, yet it is always fresh. If I read it daily, it would still be even more delightful. Three parables are here together; each of them the humblest human heart can understand, yet the depth of none of them can the profoundest human intellect fathom!

The parable of the Lost Son! What a gem is this! The boundless love of God to Lost Sinners. No pearl in the universe of such "great price" as that! And then the image which teaches and unfolds it. A father's transporting, overwhelming joy over a recovered son; a son who had broken his heart, had squandered his property on the worthless, had been at once an ungrateful rebel, and a disgrace to the family. All this forgotten, all utterly buried in the joy of the penitent's return! And this, says the Lord Jesus—He who came from the bosom of the Eternal Father—is the nearest image amongst human things of God's joy over a penitent wretch.

Beautiful is the image of the joy in heaven over the penitent sinner; it is like the joy of the shepherd over one lost sheep recovered, more than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. We have seen that joy. Beautiful too the joy of the poor woman over her recovered piece of silver. Trifling as its value to a rich man, to her it was a tenth of her all.

But far more touching the father's joy over a recovered son! His offspring, his second one, on whose birth he had smiled, whose infancy he had nursed and fondled, whose childhood he had guarded, whose youth he had guided, but whose first act, when he came of age to guide himself, was to desert his parent, to forget, to disgrace him. Oh, as I am a man, and the undoubted offspring of the Great Parent, I know, I well know who this son is! I want no Nathan the prophet to say, "Thou art the man." No, Saviour of the Lost, I know I am, I see my likeness. I have taken the portion of mercies my Heavenly Parent has given me. I have left Him. I have tried to enjoy them away from Him, and without Him. I have spent my time, my powers, my possessions, on pleasures that perish in the using, and which leave me to perish too when they are gone! Yes, I begin indeed "to be in want;" I understand that too: I have amused away many hours, but I am not happy. All is wrong for eternity. My heart aches to think of death and judgment. My business and my pleasures are very husks, when I dare but to think. Yes, I see my likeness!

But why should the likeness reach no farther? Why should I too

not come to myself? Can it be useless for me too to return? Oh, Saviour, how shall I, for joy and trembling, believe this love Thou speakest of? I am a father, I can feel that Thou hast rightly pictured how I should embrace a son returning thus. But can God feel like man? Can He melt with pity as we do? Can He, the Holy Father, embrace such a vile, worthless, apostate son as I? Why not? the difference must be the other way. He can do it better and more than I can. His fatherly love is as infinitely superior to mine as His holiness, His kindness as His power. "GOD IS LOVE." I, who have a little parental love mixed with a world of baser passions, yes, my heart would almost break with love to hear an ungrateful son again call me affectionately and tremblingly, "My father." I should forget and forgive the past for ever; if his heart were mine again, mine would be his again.

Father, I must believe this love of Thine to sinners like me, it is Thy own Son's revelation! Thou wilt receive me forgivingly, joyfully. It is much for angels and heaven to rejoice over a repenting sinner; but for THEE to rejoice over a vile worm like me, oh, my God, my Maker, my aggrieved Father, this is the crown and sweetness of all! But am I a penitent son? Do I lose my religious senses in the cares, and pleasures, and sins of daily life, or do I come to myself? Do I not merely bethink myself but resolve, and not only resolve but carry out my resolution? Do I go to my Father? Do I pursue my journey till I find Him? Do I forsake for ever my seducers, and abide in His family? Saviour, who hast pictured Thy Father's love to me by the feelings of my own heart—Father, who hast sent Thy Son to tell me Thy love—Spirit of God, who hast conquered ten thousand hearts already by this message of love, oh, conquer mine, and keep Thy conquest for ever and for ever. I am a lost son! Make me and keep me a penitent son!

DENYING CHRIST.

THAT word "deny" means "to thrust from." So when the New Testament speaks of "denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts," it means to thrust them far from us, and let them no more have dominion over the heart and life. When it bids us deny ourselves, it means to thrust on one side the appetites and passions which have been holding sway, and declare that henceforth our chief allegiance shall not be paid to them. So, too, when it speaks of the sin of denying Christ, it means to thrust His rightful claims out of sight, to disown our allegiance to His religion, and to be disloyal to His truth and

righteousness. Hence it was that the apostle Paul wrote to Titus of those who profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him; and it is to this renouncing, disowning, this thrusting aside, that the word always refers in New Testament usage. Will any one ask, after that definition, who it is that denies Christ?

Very clearly he is the denier who keeps on in a guilty course though the teachings of Christ have shown him a more excellent way. To keep on in the old sins, though you have become convinced of their sinfulness; to speak the old falsehood, though you have learned how false it is; to live as if your own passions were masters, though you have heard the higher voice of duty—that is in very truth denying Christ, and proving disloyal to His religion. It is truly a misfortune to be ignorant of the name of Jesus, or knowing it to be unable to believe in Him; but to feel convinced that He is the best spiritual Leader of humanity, and yet to go on grovelling among the low passions as if we had never been urged to come up higher, that is not a misfortune merely, but a sin against God and a crime against oneself. For the worst infidels, in this or any land, are not those who cannot believe the true and right, but rather those who believe them and yet refuse to shape their lives accordingly. Whoever thus refuses, does by that very act renounce his allegiance to conscience, disown the claims of duty, and deny the Great Teacher who made known the will of God to men.

THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

WALK in the light!—so shalt thou know
That fellowship of love
His Spirit only can bestow
Who reigns in light above.
Walk in the light! and sin, abhorr'd,
Shall ne'er defile again—
The blood of Jesus Christ, the Lord,
Shall cleanse from every stain.

Walk in the light!—and e'en the tomb
No fearful shade shall wear—
Glory shall chase away its gloom,
For Christ has conquer'd there!
Walk in the light!—and thou shalt be
A path, though thorny, bright;
For God, by grace, shall dwell in thee,
And God Himself is light.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

WEE DAVIE.

Wee Davie was the only child of William Thornburn, the blacksmith. He had reached the age at which he could venture, with prudence and reflection, on a journey from one chair to another, his wits kept alive by maternal warnings of, "Take care, Davie!" When the journey was ended in safety, and he looked over his shoulder with a crow of joy to his mother, he was rewarded, in addition to the rewards of his own brave and adventurous spirit, by such a smile as equalled only his own, and by the well-merited approval of, "Well done, Davie!"

Davie was the most powerful and influential member of the household. Neither the British fleet, nor the French army, nor the Armstrong gun, had the power of doing what Davie did. They might as well have tried to make a primrose grow or a lark sing!

He was, for example, a wonderful stimulus to labour. The smith had been rather disposed to idleness before his son's arrival. He did not take to his work on cold mornings as he might have done, and was apt to neglect many opportunities, which offered themselves, of bettering his condition; and Jeanie was easily put off by some plausible objection when she urged her husband to make an additional honest penny to keep the house. But "the bairn" became a new motive to exertion; and the thought of leaving him and Jeanie more comfortable in case sickness laid hold on the smith, or death took him away, became like a new sinew to his powerful arm, as he wielded the hammer and made it ring the music of hearty work on the sounding anvil. The meaning of benefit-clubs, sick-societies, and penny-banks was fully explained by "wee Davie."

Davie also exercised a remarkable influence on his father's political views and social habits. The smith had been fond of debates on political questions; and no more sonorous growl of discontent than his could be heard against "the powers that be," the injustice done to the masses, or the misery which was occasioned by class legislation. He had almost made up his mind not to be happy or contented, but only to endure life as a necessity laid upon him, until the required reforms in Church and State, at home and abroad, had been attained. But his wife, without uttering a syllable on matters which she did not even pretend to understand, by a series of acts out of Parliament, by reforms in household arrangements, by introducing good bills into her own House of Commons, and by a charter, whose points were chiefly very commonplace ones—such as a comfortable

meal, a tidy home, a clean fireside, a polished grate, above all, a cheerful countenance and womanly love—by these radical changes she had made her husband wonderfully fond of his home. He was, under this teaching, getting every day too contented for a patriot, and too happy for a man in an ill-governed world. His old companions at last could not coax him out at night. He was lost as a member of one of the most philosophical clubs in the neighbourhood. "His old pluck," they said, "was gone." The wife, it was alleged by the patriotic bachelors, had "cowed" him, and driven all the spirit out of him. But "wee Davie" completed this revolution. I shall tell you how.

One failing of William's had hitherto resisted Jeanie's influence. The smith had formed the habit before he was married of meeting a few companions, "just in a friendly way," on pay-nights at a public-house. It was true that he was never "what might be called a drunkard," "never lost a day's work," "never was the worse off for liquor," &c. But, nevertheless, when he entered the snuggery in Peter Wilson's whisky-shop, with the blazing fire and comfortable atmosphere; and when, with half-a-dozen talkative and, to him, pleasant fellows and old companions, he sat around the fire, and the glass circulated, and the gossip of the week was discussed, and racy stories were told, and one or two songs sung, linked together by memories of old merry-meetings, and current jokes were repeated, with humour, of the tyrannical influence which some would presume to exercise on "innocent social enjoyment"—then would the smith's brawny chest expand and his feelings become malleable, and his sixpences begin to melt and flow out in generous sympathy into Peter Wilson's foxy hand, to be counted greedily beneath his sodden eyes. And so it was that the smith's wages were always lessened by Peter's gains. His wife had her fears—her horrid anticipations—but did not like to own to her husband anything so dreadful as what she in her heart dreaded. She took her own way, however, to win him to the house and to good, and gently insinuated wishes rather than expressed them. The smith, no doubt she comforted herself by thinking, was only "merry," and never ill-tempered or unkind—"yet at times"—"and then, what if—" Yes, Jeanie, you are right! The demon sneaks into the house by degrees, and at first may be kept out, and the door shut upon him; but let him only once take possession, then he will keep it, and shut the door against everything pure, lovely, and of good report—barring it against thee and "wee Davie," ay, and against One who is best of all—and will fill the house with sin and shame, with misery and despair! But "wee Davie," with his arm of might, drove the demon out. It happened thus:—

One evening when the smith returned home so that "you could

know it on him," Davie toddled forward, and his father, lifting him up, made him stand on his knee. The child began to play with the locks of the Samson, to pat him on the cheek, and to repeat with glee the name of "dad-a." The smith gazed on him intently, and with a peculiar look of love mingled with sadness. "Isn't he a bonnie bairn?" asked Jeanie, as she looked over her husband's shoulder at the child, nodding and smiling to him. The smith spoke not a word, but gazed intently upon his boy, while some sudden emotion was strongly working in his countenance.

"It's done!" he at last said, as he put his child down.

"What's wrang! what's wrang!" exclaimed his wife, as she stood before him and put her hands around his shoulders, bending down until her face was close to his.

"Everything is wrang, Jeanie!"

"Willie, what is't? are ye no weel?—tell me what's wrang wi' you—oh, tell me!" she exclaimed, in evident alarm.

"It's a' richt noo," he said, rising up; and, seizing the child, he lifted him to his breast and kissed him. Then looking up in silence, he said, "Davie has done it along wi' you, Jeanie. Thank God, I am a free man!"

His wife felt awed, she knew not how.

"Sit doon," he said, as he took out his handkerchief and wiped away a tear from his eye, "and I'll tell you a' aboot it."

Jeanie sat on a stool at his feet, with Davie on her knee. The smith seized the child's little hand in one of his own, and with the other took his wife's.

"I havena been what ye ma ca' a drunkard," he said slowly and like a man abashed, "but I hae been often as I shouldna hae been, and as, wi' God's help, I never, never will be again!"

"Oh, Willie!" exclaimed Jeanie.

"Let me speak," said William. "To think, Jeanie"—here he struggled as if something was choking him—"to think that for whisky I might beggar you and wee Davie; take the claes aff your back; drive you to the workhouse; break your heart and ruin my bonnie bairn that loves me sae weel; ay, ruin him in soul and body for time and for eternity! God forgive me. I canna stand the thocht o't, let alane the reality." The strong man rose, and, little accustomed as he was to show his feelings, he kissed his wife and child.

"It's done, it's done," he said; "as I'm a leevin' man, it's done! But dinna greet, Jeanie. Thank God for you and Davie, my best blessings!"

"Except Himself," said Jeanie, as she hung on her husband's neck.

"And noo, woman," replied the smith, "nae mair aboot it; it's done. Gie wee Davie a piece and get the supper ready!"

THE SAVING NAME.

In 1863, immediately after the fall of Vicksburg, Mrs. Annie Wittenmeyer visited the hospitals in Helena, Arkansas. Going into a large ward one day, filled with sick and wounded soldiers, she saw in the remotest corner of the room a very sick man. She noticed him the more because he looked towards her, and there was upon his face such a look of agony and despair as she had never seen on any human face before, and wished never to see again. The surgeon, who had stepped in with her, referring to this man, said, "He is almost gone, poor fellow; he'll not live long." Mrs. Wittenmeyer, whose heart was deeply touched, went directly to the sick man. Approaching him, she said, very tenderly,—

"You seem to be very sick, my friend."

"My friend!" he returned, "I have no friend. I am here dying among strangers, and nobody cares whether I live or die." Mrs. Wittenmeyer entreated him not to say that, and assured him that he had many friends in the North. She was about to say she would be his friend, but remembering how empty such a profession of friendship would be on the part of a stranger, she directed him to Another, saying,—

"There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Can you make Jesus your Friend in this dark hour?"

On hearing the name of Jesus he cried aloud, "Oh, would that Jesus were my Friend! but I am a great sinner."

"But," responded Mrs. Wittenmeyer, "Jesus is the sinner's Friend."

"Oh, lady," said he, "you don't know what a great and wretched sinner I am, or you would not think that Jesus could save me."

"You don't know," she answered, "what a great Saviour we have, or you would not doubt. He is the mighty God, and is able to save to the uttermost. He can save you."

"It is too late! It is too late! too late!" he cried, with such deep agony of soul that the brave young men lying upon their cots covered their faces with their bedclothes and wept like children. Mrs. Wittenmeyer urged that it was not too late, and commenced telling him of the thief on the cross; but he stopped her, saying,—

"Oh! I know about the thief on the cross; but, lady, I am a thousand times worse than the thief on the cross."

She answered, "If you were ten thousand times worse Jesus could save you, for He can save to the uttermost."

This assurance gave hope, and he exclaimed, "Pray for me!" She knelt by the bedside, and while he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," she pleaded the precious promises of the Gospel. And

while he prayed and she pleaded, the mighty power of God's saving grace came down upon his soul, driving away, in a moment, every sign of agony and distress, and filling his heart with joy—joy unspeakable and full of glory. The lady remarked that if she had been an infidel up to that time, it seemed to her that she should have been convinced of the truth of Christianity in that presence. It was such a wonderful display of God's power to save. The man was healed soul and body. Three days from that time she found him on the shady side of the house, reading the Testament which she had given him the day previous. Seeing her, he said, "Oh, I am so happy this morning! I have a furlough, and I am going home. How glad my Christian mother will be to hear and see that I have found salvation!"

"Young man," said she, "wherever you go, remember, that you were snatched as a brand from the burning."

"I can never forget that," he answered. "My disease and despair were crushing me down. And I am sure that I should have died, if salvation had not come just then. But when you mentioned the name of Jesus, I knew you were a Christian, and that you would help me if you could."

Oh, what power there is in the name of Jesus, and in an earnest, sympathetic appeal to the unsaved!

"Jesus, the Name high over all,
In hell or earth or sky;
Angels and men before it fall
And devils fear and fly.

"Happy if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His Name,
Preach Him in life and cry in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"

Varieties.

Do you read the Bible?—A strange question this, to ask, and yet not needless; for multitudes have the Bible who do not read it. Are you one of these? Is it laid upon your shelf as a forgotten thing, or only looked at now and then? Do you neglect it while in health, and fly to it for comfort only in sickness? Do you pass it over on the days of labour, and consult it only on the seventh day of rest? Do you neglect it in prosperity, and have recourse to it only when in

trouble? Do you read it in your family, and not in your chamber? or in your chamber, and not in your family? Do you read it for amusement, and not for instruction? for its consolations, and not for its warnings? for its promises, and not for its precepts and threatenings? The possession of a Bible is no security against danger. The leaves of the Bible contain no charm against trouble. The treasure is there, truly; but it is those who seek that shall find, and they alone. What would it avail you to have food within your reach if you refused to taste it? Would that food prevent you from starving? What would you be the better for rivers of water if you lay down by their streams, but still neglected to drink? Would those waters quench your thirst? The Bible is food for the hungry soul, and water to the thirsty soul; but are the soul's hunger and thirst to be satisfied by an unopened volume? With a fierce and unrelenting enemy behind you, and an open door before you, entering which you would be safe, of what avail would be the asylum if you lingered on the way, or turned your back upon it? Alas, alas, such is your condition while you treat the Bible with neglect! An enemy is behind you; that enemy is death, and hell is in his train—an open door is before you; that door is the salvation which the Bible reveals. Flee for your life, sinner! flee for your life!

Inconsistencies of Christians.—Many treat religion with contempt, because its professors are not universally consistent and holy. Where in this world is perfection? What garden yields nought but choice flowers and useful plants? Does the field, though carefully cultivated, bring forth corn only? Is every tree in the orchard as fruitful as the owner desires? Can the shepherd of a large flock at any time regard all his sheep as perfectly healthy, clean, and tractable? Where are the parents who can look with unmingled satisfaction on the whole of their children? If perfection might be expected anywhere, it might be in Christ's little flock of twelve disciples; yet there was much imperfection: there was a Thomas who was faithless, a Peter who denied his Master, and a Judas who was a devil. Such objections to religion as arise from the imperfections of some of its professors generally spring from self-righteousness and self-ignorance. The sincere and humble Christian condemns the sins of hypocrites—mourns over the imperfections of God's people—but, most of all, feels, laments, and strives against his own; while the self-righteous and self-ignorant, regarding themselves with complacency, delight in discovering and proclaiming the faults of others.

IN THE JEWEL-ROOM.

I AM a country minister. Some time ago I was in London. Duty called me there. As, however, I had some leisure, I made holiday. Several notable places were visited. Among them was the famous Tower. Few things are more interesting. No matter what you may be, there is something to suit you. Are you an antiquarian? There is a Roman chapel that is said to be eight hundred years old, and Greek armour which was worn long before our Lord came into the world. Are you a scholar? There is the memorable chamber occupied by Sir Walter Raleigh when he wrote the "History of the World." Are you a soldier? There are swords and crossbows, pikes and guns in abundance. Are you a Protestant? There are shot fired by the Spanish Armada, and cruel instruments of torture used in the days of persecution.

Of course the jewel-room was visited. The Regalia of England is always an object of attraction. Very splendid is the royal crown. It looked magnificent even there, but what must it be when it sparkles and flashes in the full sunshine? Surely, the precious gems must seem to be what the Apostle calls "lively," or living, "stones." While I was gazing at them, I reflected. Several things came into my mind.

Some of the jewels disappoint. They don't seem much. Unless you were told, you would not imagine them to be as valuable as they are. For instance: there is the celebrated Kohinor diamond. I stared well at it, but I could not see anything remarkable about it. I have beheld many brilliants in ladies' rings that were far more splendid. Perhaps it is in a bad light, or maybe I did not know the scientific and approved way of observing it; but certainly it seemed more like a piece of glass than what it is. There is one jewel, however, that never disappoints people. It is called the Pearl of Great Price. Ah, Jesus Christ is always found to be better than was expected! When Henry VIII. received a miniature of Anne Boleyn he was delighted with her face, but when she came to England he was surprised and vexed. The artist had deceived him. She was not nearly so fair as the painting represented. Preachers and writers try to sketch the likeness of the Saviour, and as we listen to or read their words we may be led to think that He is indeed very glorious. But when, at conversion, we come to behold Him for ourselves, we find that He is increasingly attractive and immensely superior to all the descriptions given of Him. We find him to be indeed "the chiefest among ten thousand," and the "altogether lovely." He who has "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," discovers the Redeemer to be better than language can express. St. Bernard well sings:

"And those who find Thee find a bliss
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know."

A poor degraded fellow, having been brought to conviction and peace, was overheard praying. What do you think he said? "Oh, Lord, I didn't think you were half as good as you are." Multitudes could make the same happy confession. We sometimes cry, "None but Jesus;" we may also exclaim, "None like Jesus."

To go back to the Tower. I was not allowed to gaze long at these precious stones. They are very sharp with you in the jewel-room. The spectator must make the best use of his time, for he is not permitted to stay many minutes. This reminded me of another glorious contrast. Spiritual treasures may always be with us. They are not confined to particular places or special seasons. By no means. Prayer—for example—is a privilege continually accessible. When may we not pray? A fine array of words is not essential: nay, there need be no words at all. A little babe cries out, and its mother runs to its help. It has not uttered a syllable, but what of that? She knows what it means, and that is sufficient. A wish, a sigh, are enough to secure Divine aid. Some of the best supplications ever offered have been sent heavenwards from busy shops, crowded streets, noisy mills. The Strand may be made a sanctuary, Piccadilly a Patmos. Nehemiah prayed before a king, Jonah prayed at the bottom of the sea, Nathanael prayed under a tree, Peter on the top of a house.

As much may be said of the Bible. It is not necessary to have even a Pocket Testament in order to gain habitual comfort and strength from it. By all means have a copy of the Scriptures at hand, if convenient, but remember that David's is the best plan. Mark his method: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." There we have the best thing in the best place for the best purpose. Familiarise your mind with Gospel truths. Store the memory with such inspiring texts as these: "God is love," "He delighteth in mercy," "I am with you alway," "Follow thou Me:" and you will never be so situated as not to have help in time of need. A sword can be put in its sheath and carried at one's side without proving an obstruction to either locomotion or labour. It is the same with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Not a few of the crown-jewels have changed hands. Once they belonged to other potentates. Some are the booty of warfare. Others are presents. In various ways they have passed from one owner to another. How like the earthly! Riches are uncertain.

Nobody can be sure of retaining his treasures. There is always a possibility of losing them. There was once a great king. On the day of his coronation he made a great holiday, of course. Soldiers marched in procession. Bands of music played martial airs. Silken flags fluttered in the wind. Noblemen appeared at the place attired in gorgeous robes. As the monarch looked at the fine spectacle, he was delighted. Turning to one of his attendants, he said, "Isn't it perfectly glorious?" "No, your majesty," answered the gentleman. "One thing is wanting to make it perfect." "What is that?" asked the king. "*Continuance*," was the reply. To be sure. It was not lasting. The day would soon pass away. The soldiers would go home. The music would stop. The colours would be furled. The nobles and princes would depart, and lay aside their glittering robes. Dark night would spread its gloomy pall over the scene. And it is just so with all earthly portions. They are not lasting.

The opposite is the case with the best of all things. The "good part shall not be taken away." Pardon, salvation, God's favour, and every other spiritual blessing, may be ours for ever. Death cannot remove them. Have you got them? Are you enjoying them? If not, begin to do so. There is free pardon if you will forsake sin and pray for mercy through Jesus. He died for you. He lives now to help and to bless you. Only seek it, and He will give you all that is needful for your eternal good.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.

This benediction, in illuminated letters, should be framed in gold, and hung upon the walls of every household. Were it engraven on every heart, how soon this world would become like heaven; for the quality of this beatitude, like that of mercy, is not strained:

". . . . . it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

Every family needs its peacemaker; one who, forgetting self, seeing clearly the right, can see also through others' eyes, harmonise conflicting views, charm away the mists of ignorance, misapprehension, and selfishness, and bring all where they can see eye to eye, and their hearts vibrate to one touch of sympathy.

Could those at variance in the same household be taken into each others' consciousness, how often would pity and compassion take the place of distrust and dislike. We think a friend cold, indifferent, ill-natured, when perhaps he is burdened by a secret sorrow he may not unfold. Every heart has its load of care and grief, of disappoint-

ment and of pain, which will, at some time, make itself manifest. The peacemaker must often wound in order to heal; must kindly set the wrong of the erring one in a clear and strong light, that he may mend his ways, and study the things that make for peace. When this is done in the right spirit, and received in the right spirit, how blessed are the results. Every social circle needs its peacemaker. Our interests often seem to conflict with those of our neighbours, though they are in reality one; and he who, seeing this, can bring all to see it, and act accordingly, is a universal benefactor. The root of gossip, scandal, and backbiting, is selfishness in some one of its Protean forms, of envy, jealousy, malice, hatred. When each loves his neighbour as himself, the peacemaker's vocation will be gone; but until then there is work for us all to do. He who has the spirit of perpetual kindness, the disposition at all times to promote the happiness and to be lenient to the defects of others, to harmonise adverse interests, and conciliate opposing elements, often does good when he knows not of it. He is among men like the showers that pass over the earth, which, falling somewhere, sometimes may fall on the desert, but more often on the soil that needs and is prepared for them. A virtue goes out from him which heals those who, unwitnessed, touch the hem of his garments. He whose trouble is unknown to all, save himself and God, has his spirit often soothed and brightened by a friendly act or friendly word from one who is as ignorant as all others of his secret trouble. The kind and considerate spirit cheers despondency, and encourages wavering consciences, often when it does not suspect their existence. Such is the power and reward of true kindness. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

WHO CAN COUNT THEM?

MANY years ago I saw a strange list. It was an exact catalogue of the crimes committed by a man who was at last executed in Norfolk Island, with the various punishments he had received for his different offences. It was written out in a small hand by the chaplain, and was nearly three yards long. Had I not known from the friend who showed it me that it was true in each particular, I could scarcely have imagined it possible that so much evil could have been crowded into a single lifetime.

But the sight of the strange document gave rise to other thoughts. It occurred to me that it might well remind us of the long catalogue of our transgressions against God. Were they written out as seen by His all-seeing eye, who can tell how great the number would be?

Would not such a catalogue be long enough to reach almost from earth to heaven?

Let us judge ourselves in the light of God's holy law. That law demands supreme love to God, and unselfish love to our neighbour. It forbids every sin, in thought, word, or deed. It takes account of the motive by which our actions are suggested. It charges against us our omissions of duty, as well as acts of positive misdoing. It tells us that he who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Judged by a law so strict and holy as this, who can count the sins with which we are justly chargeable in the sight of God?

Think of those positive violations of duty on account of which the conscience will at times speak out plainly. Think of sins of the tongue, wilful falsehood, evil-speaking, sharp and bitter and angry words—are there not many of these which we have cause to lament? Think of the swarms of unhallowed thoughts, murmuring thoughts, envious thoughts, selfish thoughts, impure and unchaste thoughts, which have been permitted to lodge within the heart. Think how many actions have appeared to others deserving of praise, but which have been tainted by some unworthy motive. Think of our failures in our relative duties, and how much better we might have fulfilled the claims which an employer, a wife or a husband, a child or a parent, has upon us. Think above all, of our continued ingratitude toward Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and who gave His well-beloved Son to die for our salvation. Have we not forgotten Him days without number? Have we not slighted His merciful invitations, and grieved and provoked Him by our indifference and our rebellion? Add all these together, and infinitely more than any words can express, and who shall tell the vastness of the debt we owe?

What shall we do? Whither shall we turn for hope? Where can we find deliverance from so great a burden of guilt?

Our Saviour tells of two debtors, each of whom had a debt, but that of one was tenfold that of the other. But the creditor was merciful. In both cases he remitted the whole debt? "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

Here is free, unmerited grace and favour. The whole debt is blotted out at once and for ever, and the debtor may go on his way rejoicing. Such is the merciful compassion of the Lord Jesus toward those who, convinced by the Holy Spirit of their overwhelming sinfulness, flee to Him, and humbly take shame to themselves for their sins and iniquities. But still more do we see His grace and mercy when we remember that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He died in our place, and bore the guilt of our sins, that He might freely pardon all who trust in His name.

SOWING AND REAPING.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

WHO are sowing? who are sowing?
These young children now at play;
And the scattered seeds are growing
Night by night and day by day:
Some with fruitful grain are shooting;
Some will only weeds produce,
Which, alas, will need uprooting,
Ere the soil be fit for use.

Who are sowing? Those just leaving
Childhood and its sports behind;
Hearts with golden visions heaving,
Are they sowing to the wind?
If they toil, on Christ relying,
If His glory be their aim,
They may hope, with hope undying,
They shall reap immortal fame.

Who are sowing? Those expending
Manhood's years for objects vain;
Earth beyond, no thought extending,
What shall be their future gain?
Who are sowing? Those still clinging
To the dregs of life misspent—
Tares around their footsteps springing,
Earnest of their doom present.

Who are sowing? who are sowing?
Children, manhood, youth, and age,
And the scattered seeds are growing,
Putting forth at every stage;
All along life's pathway springing,
Bearing fruit, or flower, or weed,
On the air their odour flinging,
Either for our bane or need.

Soon will dawn the day of reaping—
Soon the gathering time will come,
When each seed, its promise keeping,
All shall bear their harvest home.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

PATTER, patter, came the rain steadily, heavily.

"Oh, dear, what a dreary day it is!" said Lottie Maynard, as she looked up from her sewing, and gazed out of the window of the old farmhouse where she resided.

"Dreary enough," replied her mother, in a cheery voice, although her spirits were evidently depressed by the gloom; "but I hope it may clear up before nightfall."

"I wonder where poor Charlie is to-night!" said Lottie, sorrowfully.

"God only knows," replied the mother, drawing a deep sigh; "but I trust His sheltering arms are round him wherever he may be. It is almost three years now since he went away."

"Oh, I remember it all so well," said Lottie; "you know, mother, he did not come down to his breakfast that morning, and you sent me up to his room to see if he was ill (for he never needed calling), and when I opened his door he was nowhere to be seen."

"He was a thoughtless, wayward boy," said the mother (tears starting into her eyes), "but he was ever kind and affectionate towards his mother, and I am afraid your father was rather too stern with him."

"Do you think he will ever come back?" said Lottie, in an earnest voice. "Oh, how very glad we should all be to see him again; and I am sure father would rejoice at his return."

"I am always hoping and praying that he may return to be a blessing to us all yet," said Mrs. Maynard. "Often I lie awake a great part of the night thinking about him. Sometimes I fear the cruel sea has swallowed him up, and all the fond hopes that were centred in him. Then, again, hope whispers he yet lives, and will gladden our hearts again with his presence. And oh, what a sweet thought it is! I trust this trial may be blessed to us all, for 'God's ways are not as our ways,' you know. It looks very dark now, but light may dawn upon us and fill our hearts with joy."

"He is quite a young man now," said Lottie, meditatively.

"Yes," said her mother; "and age and experience often bring wisdom."

Silence reigned for awhile, for both mother and daughter seemed inclined to think rather than talk. The big drops of rain beat upon the window-panes, and the wind whistled around the snug dwelling, making them realise the comforts by which they were surrounded. They thought of the dear one far away, and wondered whether he

was shielded from the pitiless storms, and above all, whether he was safe from the many temptations which beset the pathway of the young and inexperienced, when they are out in the cold and unfeeling world, away from the benign influence of home and friends.

Suddenly Lottie exclaimed, "Oh, mother, do look at that poor man walking in the middle of the road. He must be drenched to the skin. I wonder why he is out on such a dreadful day. Where can he be going?"

"He's coming towards our gate," added Lottie; "and he's dressed like a sailor. I wonder what he can want."

She watched him as he entered the gate and walked up the path to the house. Then a loud rap was heard at the door, and she ran to open it. There stood the poor man, the wet dripping from his garments, and the cold wind beating the rain in his face.

He made a low bow to Lottie, and said, in a beseeching tone, "It's a very cold, wet day. Would you please allow me to warm myself by your fire a few minutes?"

Mrs. Maynard was not the woman to refuse so reasonable a request, especially when it came from one who needed so very much what he asked. And since her son ran away to sea, her heart had warmed towards the "sons of the ocean," although it was a rare sight to see one in their part of the country, and consequently it did not often lay in her power to befriend them. So when this poor wanderer came to her door shivering with cold, and apparently so much in need of warmth and refreshment, she was not behindhand in her hospitality. She told Lottie to set a chair for him by the fire, and also to set out some food on the table near him, of which he was cordially invited to partake. After he appeared thoroughly warmed, and his hunger satisfied, Mrs. Maynard turned to him, as he sat by the fire with averted face, and inquired why he happened to be out on such an inclement day.

"Why, you see, ma'am," said the stranger, in a respectful tone, "I only landed the other day. I've just returned from a long voyage, and I'm on my way to see an old friend, who lives somewhere on this road."

"Have you been at sea long?" asked Mrs. Maynard.

"Well, not more than three or four years. I've made two voyages to China, and this last to the west coast of South America and back, and now I think I shall settle down on land, for I'm about tired of following the sea. It's a hard life, and you're treated 'most like a dog."

"It's a hard life, you say?" said Mrs. Maynard, sadly (she was thinking of her absent son). "I suppose, in your wanderings, you never met with a young man by the name of Charles Maynard, did you?"

The stranger covered his face with his hands, while a deep sob heaved his manly bosom. Then, uncovering his face, the big tears rolling down his cheeks, he looked up, and said softly, "Mother, don't you know your boy? I am Charlie Maynard!"

A mother's arms were instantly thrown around him. A mother's kisses fell thick and fast on his swarthy face; and, amid the exclamations of joy from herself and Lottie, the poor wanderer felt that he was indeed welcome.

"I knew you wouldn't know me," he said to his mother, after the first burst of joy had subsided. "My beard has grown so unusually for one of my age, and my face is so burnt by being in the tropics, that I thought I would practise a little piece of deception, and it worked, as I expected, to a charm."

"I hope you will never leave us again," said Mrs. Maynard, anxiously."

"No, mother, my mind is made up to that. I've turned over a fresh leaf, and I mean to stay, and try and do my duty to you and father. I never forgot your teachings while I was away, and by the blessing of God they preserved me from many snares to which I was exposed. I can never feel too thankful to you, mother, for the kind advice you always gave me. But where is father?"

"He is out in the barn, threshing. Sit still; he'll be in presently," said his mother.

"No, I would rather go and speak to him alone. You know I can find my way," he added, laughing.

When he reached the barn, he gently opened the door and walked in. The farmer gazed at him for a minute, and then said in a gruff voice, "What might you want here?"

"Don't you know me?" said Charles, advancing into the barn.

"Know you?" said the farmer. "How should I know you? I've never seen you before to my knowledge."

"Do you forget your runaway son?" inquired Charles, taking a few steps toward his father.

Instantly Mr. Maynard threw down his flail, with which he had been beating out the ripe grain, and, hurrying to his son, clasped him in his arms, exclaiming, "I'm so glad you've come back, Charlie; I was afraid you never would; and I never can forgive myself for the harsh way I treated you before you went away. I won't act so again, with the help of God."

"I did very wrong to run away," said Charles, penitently, "and I hope you'll forgive me."

"Indeed, I will forgive you, if there is anything to be forgiven," said his father, affectionately. "But, come, let us go into the house, and we can hear all about your wanderings."

If ever there was a happy household, it was Farmer Maynard's on that memorable evening. After a bountiful supper (such as poor Charles had not tasted since the time of his leaving home), they all knelt down and returned thanks for the return of the long-absent son and brother, and each member of the family felt that a load of sorrow had been lifted from their hearts, and joy infused into their inmost souls.

THE LORD SENT HIM.

One Sabbath a poor drunken man walked into one of our wealthy and fashionable congregations, and seated himself near the pulpit. He came in just at the close of the first hymn, and his shabby appearance and uncertain gait attracted general observation.

The minister had scarcely commenced preaching, when the stranger sunk into a deep sleep; his loud snoring almost drowned the voice of the preacher; and one of the officers of the church arose to lead him out of the building. "Let him remain," said the minister; "he does not disturb me. I hope that he may hear some word before he leaves which will persuade him to seek a new life. The man is not in his senses; there is some influence which we do not perceive which has led him here. I believe the Lord sent him."

The man continued to sleep on, but more quietly. The pealing of the organ and the singing of the choir at last aroused him. He started to his feet, and gazed in bewilderment around. It was the old hymn, "Rock of Ages," which they were singing. He sat down and buried his face in his hands. What memories came thronging upon him, who shall say? That he was affected might be seen by his flowing tears. He listened to the prayer which followed—a touching petition that all might repent and seek the Saviour, and that each one might find pardon and peace.

The next Sabbath he was again in church. This time he was a punctual and attentive listener. Although still shabbily dressed, he had paid some regard to his attire. He continued to attend and to improve in his appearance. In one of the prayer-meetings he arose and said he hoped he had become a Christian. He had had a pious mother; her great desire was that he might become a Christian. Since her death he had become a victim to intemperance. For years his course had been downward. On the Sabbath when he first entered the church he had heard the singing, and paused to listen. A voice seemed to bid him enter. He thought it might be the voice of God speaking to him for the last time. Half overcome with drink, and almost in rags, he entered the church. He heard part of the hymn, "Rock of Ages," the hymn sung by his mother upon her

death-bed. The prayer which followed seemed meant for him. He resolved to leave off his old habit, and by the grace of God he had kept his resolution.

He became a sincere and devoted Christian. Of that church he became a member, and subsequently a deacon. "I do not know," said his pastor, "a man more earnest or more successful in doing good than he."

"WILL YOU MEET ME THERE, FATHER?"

An infidel, some years ago, allowed his wife to send their two children to a Sunday-school. One of them, not long afterwards, was seized with illness, and it soon appeared, from the nature of the disease, that he could not recover. The father came home, on the last evening of the child's life, from an infidel meeting, under the influence of the sentiments and principles usually taught in such societies, when his wife said to him, "James is dying." The father went upstairs, approached the bedside of his dying child, and while the father was looking upon him, the child said, "Father, I am very happy; I am going to heaven; will you meet me there, father?" and immediately expired. This appeal was too much for him. Uttered with so much simplicity, and dictated by the Eternal Spirit, it was engraved on the tablet of his heart as with a pen of iron upon lead, and sculptured there for ever. He made many efforts to efface the impression from his mind, but without effect. He confesses that he was a drunkard, a blasphemer, and, to use his own language, "the vilest wretch out of hell." The appeal continued to be more and more affecting to him, and one Sabbath, having driven a party a few miles from town, for he was the driver of a fly, he put up his horses quickly, and went to church. One of the lessons for the day was 2 Sam. xiii., containing the reflections of David on the death of his child. When he heard the words, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," he thought, "It is impossible." His past life forbade the hope that he should ever meet his child in that happy world. Still his mind was greatly distressed. He had no pious friend; he could get neither light nor peace in this season of mental anguish. An agent of the City Mission at length called upon him; the man disclosed his state of mind; and the instructions, counsels, and prayers of the agent were blessed by the Holy Spirit: the man has renounced his infidelity; his character is entirely changed; he and his wife are regular worshippers in the house of God, and he is now cherishing the hope that he shall meet his child in heaven.

Father, mother, have you children in heaven? and WILL YOU MEET THEM THERE?

Varieties.

LIVE FOR SOMETHING.—Thousands of men breathe, move, and live; pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? They did not a particle of good in the world; and none were blest by them, none could point to them as the instruments of their redemption; not a line they wrote, not a word they spoke, could be recalled; and so they perished—their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal? Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storms of time can never destroy. Write your name by kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of the thousands you come in contact with year by year, and you will never be forgotten. No, your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind, as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as brightly on the earth as the stars of heaven.—*Dr. Chalmers.*

THE WAY TO HEAVEN.—I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen. I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price, give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone, only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book, for this end—to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights. Lord, is it not Thy word, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God"? Thou "givest liberally, and upbraidest not." Thou hast said, "If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know it." I am willing to do it: let me know Thy will. I then search after, and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Lord, teach me the way!—*Wesley.*

"URGENT PRIVATE AFFAIRS."

THIS expression reminds us of war. It is commonly used in connexion with military life. During a foreign campaign it is frequently employed. We read in the newspapers of officers who are allowed to return home because of "urgent private affairs." Leave of absence is requested. The mere request, however, is far from sufficient to procure permission. Why is it made? If there is any suspicion that it proceeds from indolence or cowardice, a prompt refusal will be given. This is obviously right. Not on slight grounds ought a furlough to be permitted at such important times. The favour can only be bestowed when the applicant is able to prove that his presence is imperatively required by "urgent private affairs."

Every man has "urgent private affairs." There are certain things that call loudly for his attention. Let us recall some of them. *Prayer* is an "urgent private affair." It is "private." Our Lord says, "Enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut the door, pray." It is "urgent." God has made it the condition on which our best welfare is secured. Jacob saw a ladder reaching from heaven to earth, by which the angels of God were "ascending and descending." Yes; before angels of blessing descend, angels of supplication must ascend. The subject is a very old one. It has become quite hackneyed. Numberless sermons and tracts have been preached and written about it. It is familiar to us as a household song. But let us not therefore despise it. Rather should we ponder it all the more. The fact that it has been thought and spoken of so often shows that it is of great value. Mankind would not read and hear about it so long unless it was deserving of high regard.

Why is it so "urgent"? We give two or three reasons. *It gets pardon.* Our sins are not forgiven except we ask. If we do, they are. No man, feeling his wickedness and abandoning his evil course, is refused mercy when he implores it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us." Through the atonement of Christ, remission of guilt is freely granted in answer to prayer. Not long ago an English tourist was in Scotland. At one of the places which he visited he had to pay a penny before he was allowed to pass through certain gates. Coming to another, he put his hand in his pocket and was about to produce a coin, when the little girl who had charge of the gate said, "You've nothing to pay; you only have to say, 'Please allow me to go through.'" This plan was adopted by the owner of the property for the purpose of reserving the right of way. As regards the door of salvation, we may enter without any good works or penances as the price of admission; we have but to request that we may be "allowed to go through." Who can deny

that calling on God is an "urgent private affair," since it procures the cancelling of our transgressions?

Prayer helps us to meet difficulties and bear troubles. Sometimes it removes them. Again and again has every devout man had evidence of this. But even when it does not, it is wonderfully consolatory. It fills us with a sweet peace and childlike trust in God, which enables us to encounter trial with a brave heart. Depend upon it, there is nothing like communion with our divine Friend as a means of making us courageous amid misfortune and peril. During a terrible tempest the rigging of a vessel's mainmast got tangled, and the mate ordered a boy to go and set it right. He touched his hat, but hesitated as he glanced up at the swaying mast, and down at the furious sea. He then rushed across the deck into the forecastle. In two minutes he reappeared, and, without a word, ran up like a squirrel. "He will never come down alive," said the crew. But he did. "What did you go below for?" asked some of them. "I went to pray." That was the secret of his fearlessness.

Prayer is "urgent," too, because *it promotes usefulness.* He who would save souls must plead for them. If we wish to speak successfully to men about God, we must speak earnestly to God about men. He who "went about doing good" spent many a night on the mountain-side interceding. Peter's sermon, resulting in the conversion of three thousand, was preceded by the daily petitions of the Church. Every believer may well be called Samuel, that is, "asked of God." Spiritual success and supplication always go in company. Toward the end of the last century, a Welsh preacher laboured with immense success. On a certain day he was to preach in a neighbourhood where a godly farmer lived, who entertained him. The hour for service came. No preacher appeared. The farmer sent a servant to tell him the congregation was waiting, He returned saying that he had gone to the visitor's bedroom-door, but that he did not disturb him because he was talking to some one. "Did you hear anything that was said?" I heard him say, "I will not go except Thou come with me;" and he was entreating the other to come. "That will do; he will come, and the Other will come with him." There was a revival. Ah, the "Other" is needful, the "Other" will give us power, our efforts will be effectual if the "Other" gives His blessing!

Self-examination is among our "urgent private affairs." Do not mistake us. A word of explanation is necessary. Some carry self-scrutiny too far. They abuse it. Their own state has too much of their attention, but that of others too little. Such become nervous and miserable. No wonder. Suppose a man were to spend a good part of the day in anxiously watching his bodily symptoms, looking

at his tongue, feeling his pulse, glancing at his face in a looking-glass, and marking the whims of his appetite, would he be a very healthful or happy man? Neither. Nor are they morally strong and spiritually vigorous who spend an enormous amount of time in poring over their ".experience." An American author says, "Some are always hovering near the spiritual barometer, and tapping the case to ascertain the weather." To such we should say, "Leave the barometer for a while, and go to work." Nevertheless, in its proper place, self-examination is wise and beneficial. One of the windows of Bristol cathedral contains a representation of Prudence. How is she engaged? She holds before her countenance a mirror, in which she is surveying herself. "Examine yourselves." "Commune with your own heart, and be still." Even heathen philosophers are a pattern to us concerning this. Seneca tells us that it was his daily practice to give an account of his actions before his conscience. It is reported of Sixtus, that every night before he slept he asked of his own heart, "What hast thou this day amended? What hast thou shunned? What good hast thou done?" Quaint and beautiful are the lines of holy George Herbert:—

"Sum up at night what thou hast done by day;
And in the morning, what thou hast to do.
Dress and undress thy soul; mark the decay
And growth of it; if with thy watch, that too
Be down, then wind up both. Since we shall be
Most surely judged, make thy accounts agree."

No man ought to be self-ignorant. He need not. We may ascertain what we are. Christ said to Peter, "Lovest thou Me?" The apostle was able to reply. We can do the same. There are tests by which we may find out whether we love Jesus. Do we think about Him? Do we like His society? Do we try to meet His wishes? If so, we may believe that we have affection for Him; if not, we must conclude that He has but a small place in our hearts.

Perhaps, reader, the latter conclusion is forced home on you. If so, do not think lightly of it. Not to love One so devoted to you, so anxious for your good, must be a sin. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema-maranatha," accursed at the Lord's coming. That seems severe, but it is not. How can he be otherwise than self-convicted and condemned who is careless of such a Saviour? But you need not be. You may come to Him. Love begets love. Receive His and it will produce yours. Hark! He cries, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." Approach Him now. Seek His pardon. Take the offered mercy, and you will soon be able to say of Him, "Whom having not seen, we love."

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

THERE is nothing more deceitful than sin. To-day fair and faultless as a summer's dream, to-morrow it is as hideous as the very jaws of hell. No rainbow has hues so bright as this infernal charmer, when passion is strong and conscience is bewildered; and no reptile, wriggling in the slimy depths beneath, is more loathsome than sin, when desire is changed to satiety, and the helpless victim is clasped within its deadly coils.

"The deceitfulness of sin!" How it hardens the conscience and blinds the mind with lies, with excuses, with subterfuges, with delusions!

"It is only a little sin," we think; but it proves to be the little end of a big sin, and when we get hold of a sin which is little, a big sin lays hold on us and will not let us go.

"It is only a light sin," we plead; but it proves too heavy for us, —so heavy that it crushes the spirit, breaks the heart, blasts the life.

"It is only once;" but that once is the first-born of an infernal brood, the beginning of a series, the first link in an ever-lengthening chain, which binds us to Satan's chariot-wheels, and drags us as captives at his will.

"I can stop when I choose," is the self-deceiving plea; but before the choice is made, the will is paralysed, the conscience benumbed, the intellect clouded, the man lost!

"The deceitfulness of sin!" Oh, it needs the sword of God to touch this false angel of light, as he stands before us in all his deluding brightness, and to rob him of the witching spell he casts, until he shrinks to earth, the vile, degrading reptile that he is!

But the Son of God was "manifest to take away our sins," to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He unlocks the prison; He bursts the chain; He unbinds the burden; He pays the debt; He breaks the spell; He unmasks the deceiver; He crushes the serpent; He cleanses the leper; He heals the diseased; He pardons the guilty; He ransoms the captive; He washes, purges, sanctifies, and saves. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin;" and cleansed by His blood, with the washing of water by the Word, and purged by the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, we shall stand at last faultless in the presence of our King, not having spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, but unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints (1 Thess. iii. 13).

The Great Physician is at hand. Are we sick of sin, weary of its deceitfulness, its misery, and of its chains? The remedy is within

our reach. "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." One cry for His mercy, and we are saved; one touch of the hem of His garment, and we are made whole; one glance at the brazen serpent, and the sting of death is gone; one trusting look unto Jesus, and we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

"Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Are saved to sin no more!"

SELF-DESTRUCTION.

"Thou hast destroyed thyself."—*Hosea* xiii. 9.

We may find shams even in a graveyard: Reading one complimentary epitaph after another, one might well ask, "Where do they bury the bad people?" Those whose dust reposes here were all among the excellent of the earth. What flattering epitaphs—and to speak plainly, what lying ones—are to be found in our graveyards!

"Thou hast destroyed thyself," might truthfully be inscribed upon the tombstone of every rejector of Christ who passes away.

Not that all is over with him. Away with such a sinner-comforting and sin-encouraging thought! If this were true, men might follow their own ways, break God's law with impunity, and any time they pleased fling themselves out of God's reach, by inflicting upon themselves a momentary and almost painless death. If this were true, we have looked upon many a huge failure of justice under the Divine administration. We have seen wicked men prosper, and after passing through long years, scoffing man and defying God, they have died as other men die. We demand a reckoning day, a time and place in which the justice of God shall be vindicated. God demands this too, and promises it. Jesus teaches this when He says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Dives as well as Lazarus, bad men as well as good men, exist after the body dies; and in the plainest, most forcible, and most terrible language we are told that the future state of the unsaved will be one of torment. They are finally and irrevocably lost, for, as Paul puts it, "everlasting destruction" is their portion.

But the lost one *destroys himself*.

It is not God's fault. See what provision He has made for man's salvation, and at what a cost, and how by His Word and His servants

He beseeches and entreats the sinner to turn and live. He who in olden time said to Israel, "What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?" and with the lips of Jesus, "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . . but ye would not," will be able to say to every one who rejects Christ, "I called and ye refused."

"Would Jesus have the sinner die?
Why hangs He then on yonder tree?"

The man who will not let God save him *destroys himself.*

It is not Satan's fault that the man is lost. True, Satan is the adversary of men—a strong man armed; but there is a stronger One than he who offers to deliver the lawful captive and to take the prey from the mighty. While God is offering to deliver from Satan's power, he who refuses God's offer and dies destroys himself.

The blame does not rest with the people of God. Those who pass from the means of grace and from the midst of Christian people to perdition, cannot fling the blame from themselves and say, "No man careth for my soul." The services of God's house are not for Christians only. Enter the prayer meeting, and you find Christians praying not for themselves alone; listen to the private pleadings of Christians, and you find them praying for the unsaved. The desire of those who love the Lord is,

"Oh, that the world might taste and see
The riches of His grace!"

The lost one cannot throw the blame upon the many temptations which beset him. What should we say if one charged with robbery were to excuse himself by saying, "If the watch had not been there I should not have taken it; but there it was, and I could not resist the temptation." The fault was not in the watch, but in the thief. So the lost one cannot throw the blame upon the drink, the theatre, the ballroom, the racecourse, or any other temptation. He destroyed himself, and this will be the keenest pang that he will feel "when the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and he is not saved" but lost. May it never be said of one who reads these lines, "He destroyed himself!"

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

NEW EYES.

It was a cold cheerless day in February; the east wind had cleared the streets of loungers and children, and few persons left the house except on urgent business. At one moment the only life visible in one narrow street was a blind fiddler and his dog. The dog, as usual, was tied to his master by a small chain, and the handle of the little alms-basket hung on his bottom jaw. The man, with his face lifted up to the leaden sky, and his sightless eyeballs rolling, was fiddling and singing a foolish but then popular song, and the sound was distinctly heard on many a hearthstone. A shopkeeper and his wife had just finished dining from pea-broth, veal, and bacon, and what was left still stood upon the table. The wife said,—

"No doubt yonder blind man would be right glad of some of this warm pea-broth, and the poor dog of these soft veal bones."

The kind dame at once opened the door, descended the three steps, met the shivering fiddler at the bottom, invited him to enter, took hold of his hand to guide him the way, and soon the beggar and his dog—the one smiling, and the other wagging his tail—were gladly dining at a warm fireside.

"Have you been long blind?" asked the godly woman.

"Fifteen years, ma'am; the smallpox took away my eyesight."

"And have you been begging your bread fifteen years?"

"No, ma'am; only a few years. I had two brothers that cared for me; they both died three years ago, and now I have none to look to me, and I was forced to go out to beg."

"Can you fiddle and sing any sacred music, psalms or hymns?"

"No, ma'am; I only know two, and they are both songs or ballads; an old sailor taught me both of them."

"But there are many nice hymns and sweet psalm-tunes that would sound well in the streets, and bring more coppers into that little basket. There is a soul in sacred music that touches the heart better than foolish ballads."

"I do not know any hymns, ma'am; I wish I did."

"Well, then, while you are eating I will try and teach you one; and when you have done you must see if you can fiddle and sing it; will you?"

"Yes, ma'am: I will."

The good woman then began to sing. She loved music, and had a good voice, and often sang God's praises in the psalms of the sanctuary. She sang "with the heart and with the understanding also," and now with the heart full—full of love to her divine Saviour, as well as kindly interest in the poor blind fiddler and his dog—she sang to him.

The tune was one of those ecstatic strains which find an echo in the spirit of song, and seem to lift the thoughts to higher spheres, to join, as it were, the company of the harpers of heaven.

The blind man, with his face towards the ceiling, rolled his now-moistened eyeballs in evident delight; even the dog seemed to forget his crumbs and bones, for even dogs like sweet music.

"Would you please sing it for me again, ma'am?"

Again and again she sang the tune and all the lines, the blind man drinking in every word and every strain; and, his dinner being finished, he took his fiddle, and, standing in the middle of the room, began and finished the strain—going through the whole, to the astonishment of the woman and the delight of the blind performer himself. After repeating it several times, in order to make quite certain, he prepared for leaving. His dog did not approve of this, but when he saw he must go, he looked up at the woman, wagging his tail, and seemed to say, "I shall call here again when we come this way."

Two months after this call, a rather impatient customer scratched at the door at the top of the three steps. The moment it was opened, without being invited, he walked in, dragging his master after him. It was the dog, leading the blind fiddler. This time a little savory hash was given to one, and a good cup of tea to the other, instead of the soft veal bones and the warm pea-broth, as before.

"So you have called again to see us; and how does the new music answer?" inquired the woman.

"Well, ma'am, I do not know how I must tell you. I have no language that will be able. The day I called here—that memorable day—and several days following, I sang pretty well; but one day I could not sing at all."

"Why, had you taken a cold?"

"No, ma'am; I had a guilty conscience stained with sin, and the oftener I sang those lines, the more guilty I felt. The verses exactly met my case, and I was indeed a penitent. I remained in the house all day in great sorrow. My dog often put his paws on my knee, for he knows when I am in trouble. I thought the verses over, but I could not fiddle, nor could I sing them. The last verse led me to trust fully in Christ, and now I can indeed 'bless the Lamb with cheerful voice, and sing his bleeding love.' I have new eyes; my

spiritual eyes are now open; and I see my Saviour, my Lord and my God. What a mercy I called here! I was then blind both body and soul, now I see with NEW EYES."

Reader, have you found the NEW EYES yet?

THE MOTHER'S GIFT.

AND must she die? It was even so. In the busiest period of a woman's life, when those she loved required her utmost oversight and help, an angel beckoned, and she dare not stay. Consumption fastened on her with its deadly grasp—a grasp which seldom fails to drag its victim to the grave.

At the close of the melancholy day on which a decisive medical opinion had been obtained, letters were posted to the absent members of the family, to gather them around their dying parent's bed. Alas, she had written herself only a week before, telling, in cheerful strains, of life and hope! How changed her thoughts and feelings in that little span!

One of these silent messengers of woe lay upon the breakfast-table, in a young merchant's house near London, waiting the appearance of its owner—the sick mother's son. It was almost the hour for business when he came downstairs, as he had not retired from revelling to rest until the dawn. A short and broken interval of feverish sleep was all his preparation for the sorrows which the morning revealed.

In the evening he might be seen hanging over the uncomplaining sufferer's couch. She felt too weak for conversation, and as he gazed into her countenance, lit up for an instant by the moonbeams struggling through a cloud, he saw that many troubles had left traces there. Moments of agony were those. Memory recalled the follies of his last few years—follies which must have wrung the maternal heart—and, ah, my reader, such remembrance has a sting!

He withdrew to his room, yet strove in vain to sleep. His mother's hollow cough was an accusing witness through the silent watches of the night; he had, even then, to answer conscience for her death.

But she grew better for a time. The expiring lamp shot up a transient blaze before it finally went out; the tide of life, which had almost ebbed away, appeared for a moment to reflow. Summer was just revisiting our shores; its genial warmth entered the sick man's room, and many a pale and wasted form might be seen moving from

his door. The southern breeze seemed to bear health upon its wings, and the drooping mother went forth to enjoy it, supported on the arm of her eldest son. They chose their path along an unfrequented glen; it was a favourite walk; yet soon the invalid began to tire. The long grass, mingled with a few wildflowers, furnished the softest cushion to the back; and there (shut out from any stranger's curious ear) the mother could unburden all her heart. She did so; tears flowed freely from the listener's eyes at every faithful word, till, quite exhausted, she was obliged to stop. She then drew out her Bible; it had been her loved companion ever since she was a girl; through each new circumstance of chequered life she had found in it direction and support. And now she gave it to her son. He would perhaps read to her from its pages when her own eyes failed, and read it always for her sake.

Another month elapsed, and all was over. The young man returned to business; his old associates would have gathered round him as before. But he was an altered man. It is true the only check that had once held him back in a career of vice appeared to be removed, but a holier principle supplied its place. He had been led to see and mourn over his guilt; and mercy did not leave him in despair. The Saviour's voice had called him from a death in sin to live for ever to his Lord.

Henceforward his remaining days passed tranquilly along; but they were few. The same disease which stretched his mother in the grave seized upon the son, and he went home to die. He was, however, then a happier man than when he journeyed in the like direction in the bloom of health. Death could have nothing so terrible to him as the war of passions that once tore his heart while hurrying fresh from scenes of dissipated vice to his injured parent's side. He felt, indeed, the silver cord beginning to be loosed; he was resigned that it should be so. He looked across the struggles of dissolving clay to union with his mother in the skies, when all the pangs his waywardness had caused should be eternally forgiven. Thus did his soul grow joyful as his frame decayed; the silent and forsaken chamber became to him a palace, peopled with the beautiful visions of a brighter world.

One lovely evening, towards the end of June, the gradually sinking invalid resolved to exert his remaining strength to reach the scene of his affecting conversation with his mother, and gaze upon it again before he died. Every little object, as he paced slowly along the path, seemed dear to memory; at last he came to the deep grassy glen. His sunken eyes brightened as he entered it. All was unchanged except himself. The trees still spread their shadows over the moss-covered bank, the babbling brook ran sportingly at the foot, the hills

were covered with a verdure just as green. Here he requested to be left alone to muse.

Day had faded some time when the companion of the feeble sufferer's walk revisited the glen to assist him in returning home. He found the sick man lying lifeless on the bank. His features were as calm as if he had been asleep; in one hand was clasped a Bible—his mother's gift—the other pressed her miniature upon his heart.

Oh, if the mothers of this happy land were only taught to use their influence aright, we should not fear for the result! They might perhaps be called to droop and die, to leave their children in a dangerous world; but, ah, their voice speaks loudly from the silent tomb,—it is always echoed by the grave. Their gentle pleadings on behalf of God would seldom fail to move the sturdy spirit of their sons, though none beside might be allowed a word. As years rolled on, the scattered members of earth's households, one by one, should all be gathered home to heaven; and not the least delightful of its perfect joys would be the family greetings as they came!

"A STRANGER."

In a long list of names—a record of deaths in S——, published in the newspapers—stood once this simple, affecting announcement:—

"Aug. 21.—*A Stranger.*"

Unknown, unbefriended, disease attacked him in a town far from his native home. The bustling servants pass in and out of his room, rendering the cold attentions of hirelings, linger in momentary awe to watch the last spasm, and then announce at the desk, "The man in No. — is dead."

Who is he? There is no name on the books. There is not one in the throng that crowd the dining-hall that knew him; none whose appetite is lessened by the melancholy inquiry. They hurry on the burial, for another is waiting for the dead man's room; and the next morning's paper contains the careless item, "A stranger died yesterday."

And perhaps in some distant village, a mother, a wife, a betrothed maiden, is anxiously watching every arriving post, and wondering why no letter comes from the beloved absent one. And still for many a weary day will they wait and hope, for there is none to convey the crushing intelligence that the beloved is no more. By slow degrees the long silence will at last convince them that he must be dead.

What pangs will shoot through many hearts as this simple announcement is read and remembered! If the name had only been there, the anguish of suspense would be ended. But perhaps it may have been my brother, my son, my husband, will be the suggestion of many a troubled spirit, even when the lips refuse to utter the alarm of the heart, and the mind quietly labours to reason away its own fears.

A Stranger!—And yet he was well known to God. His eye had traced him through all his journeyings, had witnessed all his errors and sins, and his repentings and prayers too, if any were offered. If he was a renewed child of God, there was abundant consolation administered to his departing spirit. A Voice, sweeter than that of dearest earthly friend, whispered comfort to his soul; and a Hand, more soft and tender than that of wife or mother, was laid beneath his aching head. If he was a true disciple of Jesus, he now experiences no regret that his sojourn in this world was so short, that the bright visions of earthly wealth, which perhaps led him away so far from home to die, were dispelled, for he has become a resident, and no nameless stranger, in that city, whose very streets are paved with gold, where a golden crown is on every head, and a golden harp in every hand.

And if he was not a Christian,—but we dare not dwell on that thought; it is too fearful! And yet each unransomed reader would do well to pause and ask himself, "What would be my destiny were my death thus unattended or sudden?" How profitably, under the influence of the long train of reflection suggested by such an announcement, may be read Montgomery's beautiful poem,—

"Once in the flight of ages past
There lived a man—and who was he?
Mortal! howe'er thy lot be cast,
That man resembled thee.

And joy and grief, and hope and fear,
Alternate triumphed in his breast:
His bliss and woe—a smile, a tear!
Oblivion hides the rest.

The bounding pulse, the languid limb,
The changing spirits rise and fall,—
We know that these were felt by him,
For these are felt by all.

The annals of the human race—
Their ruins since the world began,
Of *him* afford no other trace
Than this—THERE LIVED A MAN."

"WHAT DAVID DID."

DAVID means beloved. A suitable name to him who bore it. Was he not beloved on all sides? He was the object of Divine favour, "the man after God's own heart." Among men, none has been a greater favourite. We all like him. His life interests young and old. Children never weary of listening to the memorable story of his encounter with the giant. Adults can hardly be comforted better than by reading his psalms. Christ honoured him. He allowed Himself to be called "the Son of David." On several occasions He spoke of the renowned king. When found fault with by the Scribes and Pharisees, He justified Himself by asking, "Have ye never read what David did?" It will do us no harm if, for a few minutes, we glance at his remarkable career, trying to remember "what David did."

"*David did wrong.* Recollect that. Let us have fair play. No one-sided statements, if you please. Tell the whole truth. The hero you boast so much about was guilty of crime. Did he not commit murder and adultery?" So some speak. We have no wish to deny what they say. David was not perfect. He sinned, and sinned deeply. But pray bear in mind two or three facts. If he transgressed greatly, he also repented greatly. Bitter was his sorrow. It is impossible to read the book which he has left behind, without observing this. Certain parts of it are nothing less than the wail of a broken heart. When we talk of his evil, we ought likewise, in all justice, to make mention of his fervent penitence. Moreover, nothing in this world is free from defects. "What garden yields nought but choice flowers and useful plants? Does the field, though carefully cultivated, bring forth corn only? Is every tree in the orchard as fruitful as the owner desires? Can the shepherd of a large flock at any time regard all his sheep as perfectly healthy, clean, and tractable?" It is not reasonable to expect that the saints of old should be an exception to the rule. There is a proverb to the following effect, "Better is a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without one?" A sovereign covered with dirt, worn at the edges, partly defaced, and disfigured by scratches, is preferable to a new penny without a speck of dust, or a single mark upon it. An erring servant of God is more to be admired than a merely moral person who, while he avoids vice, never lifts his thoughts and affections to heaven. Thomas Carlyle cannot be suspected of undue partiality for Old Testament worthies, yet hear what he says: "On the whole we make too much of faults. Faults! The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none. Readers of the Bible, above all, one would think, might know better. Who is there called 'the man according to God's own heart'? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer, and ask, 'Is this your man

according to God's own heart?' The sneer, I must say, seems to me a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it—the remorse, temptations: too often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it—be forgotten?"

David did his duty in each walk of life. That is deserving of careful notice. Wherever Providence placed him, he sought to live wisely and well. On this account he rose from obscurity to fame and power. "Faithful in little," he was entrusted with "much." First he comes before us a mere shepherd. He has to keep his father's flocks. And he was true to his work. Courageous where many would have been blanched with fear, he bearded the very lion, and slaughtered the shaggy bear that attacked his sheep. Nor did the anointing of Samuel make him vain and restless. Far from it. He went back to his commonplace, humble occupation, as lowly and industrious as ever. Next we find him delivering Israel from the blustering Philistine. His patient, plodding efforts to acquire proficiency with the sling served some purpose now! Afterwards he appears as a victorious general in the Hebrew army, and one who, when envied and threatened by the king, was but the more circumspect, "behaving himself wisely wherever he went." Finally, he ascends the throne, exchanging the position of a subject for that of a monarch. We have a great lesson in all this. Let young men, especially, learn it. It is common to speak and write a good deal concerning "getting on in the world." Our subject has a very important bearing on that. If, by getting on in the world, honourable and righteous prosperity is meant, then we may clearly see, from "what David did," how it is to be secured. Do your duty where you are, and it will fit you for something higher. According to the well-known adage, "A good servant maketh a good master." So he does, and, what is more, "a good servant" often becomes "a good master." Archbishop Trench wisely observes: "'A stone that is fit for the wall, is not left in the way.' This is a saying made for those who appear for a while to be overlooked, neglected, passed by; who perceive in themselves capacities, which as yet no one else has recognised or cared to turn to account. Only be fit for the wall; square, polish, prepare thyself for it; do not limit thyself to the bare acquisition of such knowledge as is absolutely necessary for thy present position; but rather learn languages, acquire useful information, stretch thyself out on this site and on that, cherishing and making much of whatever aptitudes thou findest in thyself; and it is certain thy turn will come. Thou wilt not be left in the way; sooner or later the builders will be glad of thee; the wall will need thee to fill up a place in it, quite as much as thou needest a place to occupy in the wall."

David did what others failed to do. Of course we allude to the

destruction of Goliath. All were alarmed. Neither Saul nor his people dare meet the huge, bragging enemy. Men's hearts failed them. They were compelled to submit to his daily insolence, without venturing to attack him. Not so the son of Jesse. Without any flourish of trumpets, or vehement boastings, he approached the taunting heathen, and soon laid him low. How came this to pass? Why did the fair-haired, blue-eyed lad accomplish that which none beside attempted? He tells us: "I come unto thee in the name of the Lord;" and again, "This day shall the Lord deliver me out of thine hands." Ah! there is the secret of it. He trusted in God, and "all things are possible to him that believeth." Many applications may be made of this, but the most useful is the following. As regards sin, we, my reader, by looking to God, can do what numbers fail to do. Not a few try to live a good life, but do not succeed. They remind one of the ancient Greek fable: Sisyphus was compelled to roll a huge stone to the top of a mountain; but no sooner had he got it there, than it fell back again, and his wearisome task had to be renewed. "Love's labour lost" aptly describes their sad condition. There are few things more depressing and disappointing than attempts at righteousness without help from above. Brother, Christ is "the power of God." His atoning death is the grand means by which the Most High cures us of disobedience and delivers us from temptation. When the Roman Colosseum began to fall into decay, the people used to take the stones of which it was composed to build their country houses. To such an extent was this carried on, that this noble relic of the city's ancient greatness seemed to be threatened with destruction. To prevent so great a loss, antiquarians taxed their ingenuity to no purpose, until Pope Benedict XIV. invented a simple and effective expedient. He had a huge cross made and placed in the centre of the arena, thereby declaring the locality to be sacred. Not a stone was afterwards removed. We, too, have a decaying influence within, and pilfering enemies busy upon the soul's citadel. The cross of Christ is the only remedy. The consciousness of pardon, through it, is the surest defence against Satan.

David did good to men in all ages. We need hardly say how. His psalms have been, are, and will be a blessing to untold thousands. When we pray, we involuntarily use his words. Praise is certain to adopt his thanksgiving. Our joy finds expression in his jubilations. Nor can our sorrow be voiceless while he speaks to us in his penitential lamentations. What an encouragement is this to such as try to benefit mankind! That your labours cannot be "in vain in the Lord" inspiration clearly declares. Absolutely fruitless effort is simply an impossibility. But that is not all. The effects of our endeavours may continue far beyond our expectations. They may

last long after we have slept the last sleep. Nay, generation after generation may feel the vibrations of spiritual good which we set in motion. Let us remember this. It will fire us with new zeal, and fill us with fresh courage in seeking to bless the world.

THE HEART OF CHRIST.

JESUS wept over the woes of a single city, and do you think that He never wept over the woes of a world? He wept in public, where He would certainly restrain His feelings as much as possible; and do you think He never wept in secret? Could we lift the sacred vail of His solitary hours; of His seasons of retirement while an obscure workman of Nazareth; of His forty days' fasting and prayer in the wilderness; of His vigils on the mountain-tops and in the deserts—what prayers, what intercessions, what tender and heavenly sympathies with the sorrows and woes of humanity would come to light! His affections were not limited to Judæa. He did not love those merely who loved Him. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and over the distress of Martha and Mary, and why not over the vast congregation of the dead of more than a hundred and thirty generations past, and over all the broken hearts of widows and starving orphans from the beginning of the world? Why not over the distress of all the sick, the delirium of the deranged, the agonies of the dying? Do you not see why He went about with restless assiduity to console, to comfort, to bind up broken hearts, raising the dead, curing, and cleansing, and restoring men to the enjoyment of health, sight, hearing, and reason? How could He do otherwise with a heart like His? He would have done so, though no man had believed in Him on that account, or returned to Him a grateful word or look. Touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, He stands to-day as a great and merciful High Priest over the House of God, knowing how to succour those who are distressed and tempted, and having compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way.

"Oh, not the memory of His mightiest deeds
Within its holiest shrine my heart hath kept.
For me no dearer record lies within
This sacred Book of books than "Jesus wept."
He wept for human grief. He wept with her,
The desolate mourner at the sepulchre!
Oh, how my soul in love and sorrow cries
To Him, earth's holiest and its humblest One!
How it would offer, for a sacrifice,
The broken heart those blessed words have won!

How it doth long of all His love to tell,
Whose pitying tears for earthly sorrows fell!
But most it blesseth Him whene'er are shed
Grief's bitterest tears—HE WEPT BESIDE THE DEAD!"

What encouragement we have to approach the mercy-seat, and seek the blessings which He longs to give! "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

TOUCHING THE BOTTOM WITH THE POLE.

A COUPLE of men, in a crazy craft, being caught in a squall, betook themselves, one to praying to the Virgin, and the other to pulling toward the shore. Soon the latter touched bottom, and turning to his devout comrade, said: "What's the use of praying when you can touch the bottom with the pole?" So say multitudes by their conduct, who would not for the world say anything so ludicrous by word. The only difference is that they are not half so truthful in expressing what is giving direction to their lives; but their piety is of no higher type. Such persons act toward their Divine Helper as they do toward their physician—turn to him when they can find no possibility of helping themselves. Many have no use for ministers—unless it may be to ridicule them and their work—until they are smitten with disease; and when their cases become too desperate for the skill of the doctor, they send post-haste for the minister, and, without reference to either time or convenience, he must come.

We once had occasion to rebuke one of this kind, whose stock of wit consisted in low sneers at ministers and their work. Not long after he became very ill. The doctors said he would die. He sent for us ("because," he said, "we had been faithful in our rebuke") to administer to his spiritual wants, which could be summed in one sentence—he did not want to die. He made great promises; one that he would give a hundred pounds to our church—though he did not say so, the inference was clear—if we either got him well, or in heaven. Unaccountable to tell, he got well. Our prayers were not so refreshing with returning health. Soon they were set aside with the bottles of the remnants of his drugs. Soon he avoided us. He never spoke of the hundred pounds; he would neither pay nor pray, since he could "touch the bottom with the pole."

A father came to a Young Men's Christian Association in great distress, with a request that prayer should be offered for his son, who was lying dangerously ill. It was a surprise to learn that the father did not profess to be a Christian, and great hopes were entertained that he would be. He came to church several times, and his son recovered.

But he has never been heard of since. "What is the use of praying when you can touch the bottom with the pole?"

A rich man lived opposite to a new place of worship in process of erection. The people were poor and struggling. His property had been greatly increased in value by their struggles. The minister ventured to ask him for help. He drove him off, saying, "I have no use for churches or chapels; the world would be better off if we had fewer of both." The rich man came to grief. He went into a decline at last. Death got uncomfortably near. He sent for the preacher he had dismissed from his presence. His tune had changed. Preachers were not such a nuisance when Death was eyeing his victim. He never considered time or convenience. He often called the preacher from his bed, and the family acted as if it was their right to command, and would venture to rebuke if he did not come to time. Many promises were made. One day, when they thought he was dying, they all promised to meet him in heaven. The man died, the minister attended the funeral, and the family all attended his service the second Sabbath after the burial. One of the daughters came the next Sabbath; but having shown their black, this was the last seen of them. "What is the use of praying when you can touch the bottom with the pole?"

There are multitudes like Jeroboam and his wife, who were not very fond of prophets, and thought Israel could get along better without them. But the child of Jeroboam, his darling son Abijah, fell sick. Matters changed in that royal household. Old Ahijah had been a great bore to them, and had worried them mightily about their altar-service and their advanced Ritualism. But the case was urgent. He dared not go himself, but sent his wife to the prophet under a disguise, to know what the future of the child would be. But even she was better than some of our moderns. She took in her hand a little present of cracknells, and honey, and bread, to make herself look like a poor but worthy woman, hoping by her humble drapery to conceal herself from the vision of the despised prophet. She tried to get by hypocrisy what many now-a-days get by "cheek." Any means whatever, by which the efficacy of that prayer may be obtained in adversity which would not be tolerated in prosperity. She was detected coming. God revealed her to the prophet, who said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam." The whole is a dramatic representation of multitudes who, while unwilling to serve God in health and prosperity, are yet expecting to get the blessings by stratagem promised in their adversity to those who do honour and serve Him, and who, as soon as they are relieved, go back to their old ways, practically saying, "What is the use of praying when you can touch the bottom with the pole?"

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

WHAT MYRTIE LEARNED BY THE FOUNTAIN.

"ALWAYS filling one's pitcher, and always finding it empty, that seems to be all there is left of life."

Myrtie Austen set her pitcher down with a "bang" that would have broken its heart, if the soft green grass had not held up tender hands to save it. In a moment Myrtie was ashamed of her impatient temper, yet as she picked up the pitcher with one hand, she brushed away the hot tears with the other.

It had been a hard morning in the little cottage Myrtie called her home. Mother was worried and unhappy over a batch of obstinate bread that refused to rise as it ought to do; Davy had walked over the clean floor with muddy shoes as he gathered his fishlines and bait from their nooks and corners; Sue had stumbled over a pot of geranium slips Myrtie had been watching a month; and the baby—well, if a baby chooses to behave agravatingly it can succeed in a most wonderful manner! He had pulled Myrtie's hair, to begin with. Then he had crept to the corner of the cloth hanging over the breakfast-table, and dragged at it until a cup had come over, and others nearly followed, a few grains of salt had got in his eyes, and a goblet of water had wet his clean dress.

So when Myrtie found herself in the cool green nook by the pleasant fountain, she resolved to stay there a long time, and grumbled softly in this wise:

"I won't go home in an hour. Then nobody can call, 'Myrtie! Myrtie!' every minute, and they can get along somehow. Sue can look after the baby, and mother will contrive some other way if I don't do this, and that, and the other. I wish I were a bird; don't I, though. Nothing to do but fly, and sing, and prink, and have a good time. I wish I were Kitty Clive, and could have on a blue dress, and have nothing to do instead of always filling the tea-kettle. Oh dear!"

Myrtie's face had puckered itself into an ugly pout, that would have been funny if it had not been so wicked and unkind, as she sat down to enjoy her new plan, leaning her head against the green bank, and looking up at the bit of blue sky glimmering in between the branches.

All at once it seemed to her that a little bit of an old woman in a green cloak and red cap hopped along the wall toward her, and in a queer little voice kept saying:

"Better go home! better go home!"—and plucked at her apron until she ran, and followed her through great nodding ferns and tree-branches. She did not remember the way at all, but little Red-Cap hopped on before her, and whenever she stopped chirped louder than ever:

"Better go home! better go home!"

At last they came out of a wooded path, and found themselves close by Myrtie's own door. It looked very lonely there. There was nothing to be seen of Sue or Davy on the doorstep, and there was no sound anywhere; it was strangely still.

In the old kitchen fireplace the ashes were cold on the hearth. In the upper rooms the beds were made quite smoothly, but no living thing was seen. The baby's cradle was empty, and a tiger-lily she had tied above the baby's head was swinging dry and dusty.

She called softly to one and another, "Mother! Susie! Davie!" But there was no answer, and she grew frightened at the stillness.

Red-Cap hopped about the room awhile, and finally drew Myrtie's attention to the big Bible lying open at the family record.

And there, in great black letters, were the names of all she loved, beneath the heading of "Deaths"—Mother, Susie, Davie, Baby, and all.

And then there came quick remembrance of the tender mother-love that had smoothed the rough places for her daughter's feet, toiling on so patiently day after day to make the little home a happy place; of Davie's sturdy loving arms about her neck, and his brown eyes shining like stars; of Susie's timid, quiet voice, and loving ways; of baby's shout and crow of welcome, that she must miss for evermore; and over all, the dreadful sorrow that she had parted from them in anger, and now could never say how sorry and ashamed she had grown. Gone—all gone!

And then she grew so frightened and distressed that she gave one great cry: "Oh, mother! mother! come back for one moment—only one!" But the cry seemed to die in her throat and become a sob. Then the house seemed to totter and reel about her—

And Myrtie awoke!

For all this was only a dream. Myrtie looked about vainly for the little old woman, but could not find her anywhere. A brown thrush was hopping about in the branches above her head, and the fountain was gurgling its same old song.

Very thankfully did the maiden fill her pitcher and return homeward after her doleful dream. And oh, how sweet and dear looked her mother's patient face, as Myrtie came cheerfully home with her burden! How she kissed the baby over and over, remembering how the empty cradle and the dusty lily looked!

All the doleful clouds seemed to vanish out of her sky, and her face was a pleasant one to see as she went to and fro, brightening this thing and that with dainty touches by the way. In the worried days that came after that, when she well-nigh complained again, a memory came back of the lonely home of her unforgotten dream, and she smothered all complaints by kissing the baby a dozen times instead of once.

THE CRY FOR HELP.

My name is Anthony Hunt. I am a drover, and I live miles and miles away upon the Western prairie. There wasn't a home within sight when we moved there, my wife and I; and now we haven't many neighbours, though those we have are good ones.

One day, about ten years ago, I went away from home to sell some fifty head of cattle—fine creatures as ever I saw. I was to buy groceries and dry goods before I came back, and, above all, a doll for our youngest Dolly; she had never had a store-doll of her own, only the rag-babies her mother had made her. Dolly could talk of nothing else, and went down to the very gate to call after me to "buy a big one." Nobody but a parent can understand how my mind was on that toy, and how, when the cattle were sold, the first thing I hurried off to buy was Dolly's doll. I found a large one, with eyes that would open and shut when you pulled a wire, and had it wrapped up in paper and tucked it up under my arm, while I had the parcels of calico and delaine and tea and sugar put up.

It might have been more prudent to stay until morning, but I felt anxious to get back, and eager to hear Dolly's prattle about her doll. I mounted on a steady-going old horse of mine, and pretty well loaded. Night set in before I was a mile from town; and settled down, dark as pitch, while I was in the middle of the wildest bit of road I know of. I could have felt my way through, I remembered it so well; although, when the storm that had been brewing broke and pelted the rain in torrents, I was almost five miles, or maybe six, from home. I rode on as fast as I could.

But all of a sudden I heard a little cry, like a child's voice. I stopped short and listened. I heard it again. I called, and it answered me. I couldn't see a thing. All was dark as pitch. I got down and felt about in the grass—called again, and again was answered. Then I began to wonder. I'm not timid; but I was known to be a drover, and to have money about me. It might be a trap to catch me unawares, and rob and murder me. I am not

superstitious—not very; but how could a real child be out on the prairie in such a night, at such an hour? It might be more than human. The bit of a coward that hides itself in most men showed itself to me then, and I was half inclined to run away.

But once more I heard that cry; and said I, "If any man's child is hereabouts, Anthony Hunt is not the man to let it die." I searched again. At last I bethought me of a hollow under the hill, and groped that way. Sure enough, I found a little dripping thing, that moaned and sobbed as I took it in my arms. I called my horse, and the beast came to me; and I mounted, and tucked the little soaked thing under my coat as well as I could, promising to take it home to mammy. It seemed tired to death, and pretty soon cried itself to sleep against my bosom.

It had slept there over an hour, when I saw my own windows. There were lights in them, and I supposed my wife had lit them for my sake; but when I got into the door-yard, I saw something was the matter, and stood still, with dead fear of heart, five minutes, before I could lift the latch. At last I did it, and saw the room full of neighbours, and my wife amidst them, weeping. When she saw me, she hid her face.

"Oh, don't tell him," she said; "it will kill him!"

"What is it, neighbours?" I cried.

And one said, "Nothing now, I hope; what's that in your arms?"

"A poor lost child," said I. "I found it on the road. Take it, will you? I've turned faint." And I lifted the sleeping thing, and saw the face of my own child, my little Dolly!

It was my darling, and none other, that I had picked up upon the drenched road. My little child had wandered out to meet "daddy" and doll, while her mother was at work. And Dolly they were lamenting as one dead. I thanked Heaven on my knees, before them all.

It is not much of a story; but I think of it often in the night, and wonder how I could bear to live *now*, if I had not stopped when I heard the cry for help upon the road—the little baby cry, hardly louder than a squirrel's chirp.

WHAT SIN CAN I HAVE DONE TO-DAY?

I WAS conducted once, by an excellent man, to the sick-bed of a woman in the worst part of the city of Bristol. She was advanced in life, most unpromising in appearance; her form and features very coarse and masculine,—I may say repulsive. After a long conversation with her, in which I could not succeed in showing her that she

was in any important sense a sinner, I inquired, "Do you think you have committed a single sin to-day?"

She exclaimed, with surprise, "Oh, sir, what sin can I have done to-day? Sin? none, to be sure,—lying here."

"Well," I replied, "I wish I could say as much—that I had done no sin to-day."

It was some time before circumstances permitted me to see her again. When I did so, the first thing she said was, "Well, sir, do you remember telling me that you wished you could say you had done *no sin* to-day? I could never forget that; I thought if you, that came to talk to me for my good, and relieve my wants, had sinned that day, surely I must too; and the Lord has shown me since that I have a *heart* that can sin when my body is ill in bed."

To be brief, this woman became a sincere Christian. The whole street respected her; her example—for she said little—led many to become Christians too. She recovered enough of the almost lost power of reading to ponder over the New Testament, and she died truly happy, the most irreligious around confessing that the change was so great that, if any were gone to heaven, she was. I never myself saw a body interred in more "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection."

But what began these joyful hopes in herself and others? It was her finding out that she could be a sinner even when lying helpless on a sick bed; and that a friend, engaged in the very duties of charity and religion, could be a sinner too; and she learned yet further, that even such sins must be matter of real shame and sorrow, and that the blood of Christ alone could take them away. It is *sin*—not our sins being a few more or a few less—it is *sin* in any degree of it which ruins us. It is a fatal because an unnoticed evil, in our very bosoms. We *have* done to-day, were all other days blameless—we have done to-day enough to condemn us as breakers of God's most righteous law. We have done it in our hearts, and have we not in our words and deeds too? Now, have you thought this day's sin of consequence enough to go to Christ for pardon? Has the thought of your day's sins, and Christ's death, as the only possible atonement for them, entered your mind at all? Friend, let me commend to your reflections the experience of this poor and unlearned, but strong-minded and truly excellent woman, and may our last end be like hers!

Varieties.

WHAT! REFUSE ETERNAL LIFE! — What! refuse eternal life! reject a kingdom! and in their stead take death, and shame, and weeping as thy portion?—prefer an eternity of darkness to an eternity of light!—turn away from an open paradise, and choose the desolation of the everlasting wilderness? Does not all this seem incredible, impossible?—Meanwhile the day is wearing on. The shadows of the night that has no morn beyond it are falling down upon you. "There is sorrow on the sea, and it cannot be quiet" (Jer. xlix. 23). The world is growing old; and the cry of its transgression is going up, like the cry of Abel's blood, demanding speedy vengeance. That cry must soon be heard; for the sole reason of delay is the long-suffering of God, "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter iii. 9). What, then, are you to do, who are still unsaved and unsheltered? Will pleasure be pleasure then; or will it not be gall and wormwood? Will the world's gay glitter continue then to bewilder you? Where will be the spell of its beauty, the music of its siren song? They "are not;" and "in one hour thou art made desolate." Its blossoms have gone up as dust; and its joys are forgotten dreams. The freshness of youth has faded; the ties of kindred are broken; the gladness of companionship is at an end; the greetings of neighbourhood have ceased; the voices of home are silent; and the old familiar melodies of earth have died away. All have been "covered with a cloud" in the day of the fierce anger of the Lord! And for thee, unsaved one, there remaineth nought but the everlasting darkness which no star shall gladden, and on which no hope shall arise. The judgment seemed long in coming; thou wert hoping that it would never arrive. But it has come at last. And its coming is the final quenching of all hope to thee!—*Bonar.*

AN APPEAL.—Poor sinner, awake; Eternity is coming, and his Son, they are both coming to judge the world; awake, art yet asleep, poor sinner? Let me set the trumpet to thine ear once again. The heavens will be shortly on a burning flame, the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up, and then wicked men shall go into perdition; dost thou hear this, sinner? Hark, again, the sweet morsels of sin will then be fled and gone, and the bitter burning fruits of them only left; what sayest thou to that, sinner? Canst thou drink hell-fire? Will the wrath of God be a pleasant dish to thy taste? This must be thine every day's meat and drink in hell, sinner."—*Bunyan.*

FILTHY RAGS.

"Not a nice subject to write about," you think. Perhaps not. But sometimes disagreeable things are useful. It may be so with this. Like medicine, it is unpleasant; like medicine, it may be beneficial. At all events, let us see.

The Bible compares men to filthy rags. Isaiah employs the expression. It seems strong. At first it appears quite extravagant. It is not. A little attention will suffice to show its correctness. The unconverted are like filthy rags spiritually. Not morally. There is some good in all. A book was once written called, "Praise and Blame." In it many different characters were brought forward, all sketched from real life, and in each there was something to praise and something to blame. Exactly; such is usually the case. The bad have some commendable qualities, however small. Nevertheless, though a person is very virtuous, if he is unsaved he is in a guilty and perilous condition. As regards God he is woefully deficient. Does he love Him, trust Him, daily seek to do His will? No. If candid, he would not for a moment pretend that he does. His heart may be warm earthwards, but it is cold heavenwards. Here is the great sin, the main shortcoming of human nature—indifference to God.

That is not all. Each of us has done actual wrong. We cannot deny that we have frequently committed deeds against which conscience has loudly protested. Thoughts and feelings have been allowed board and lodging within our souls, which we knew were utterly unworthy of us. A Roman orator, accused of a crime whereof he was innocent, said that he wished he could have a window put in his heart in order that all might see how guiltless he was. Can you and I say this? Indeed we cannot. Not seldom it would have gone hard with our reputation if the world could have looked into our hearts! Therefore, though the expression "filthy rags" has a harsh sound when we first read it, we are not long before we find that it is appropriate.

Filthy rags were not always filthy, nor were they always rags. Once they were clean. Some of them were "fine linen." From clothing the person, they degenerated into miserable refuse. And man was not always sinful. In the beginning Adam was pure. "God made men upright, but they have sought out many inventions." The heart is likened to a stone: "I will take away your heart of stone;" but stones were, years ago, nothing but earth. In museums you may occasionally see a bit of rock with the impress of a fern or the mark of an animal's foot on it, showing that, long ago, it had been soft. Tremendous upheavings of nature took place, burying it, subjecting it to immense pressure and heat; hence its present

form. The great disaster of the Fall has done something similar to the soul. Very often, wicked men say, "Why do you rebuke me for what I do? Can I help it? Did not God give me my strong passions, lusts, and appetites?" No. He did not. He gave you appetites and "passions," as you call them, but He did not make them as *strong* as they are. You have done that. By your indulgence they have grown into tyrants. Abuse has changed them from servants to masters. You cannot blame God.

"When passion leads to wild excess
And folly wakes to shame,
It cannot make the madness less
To cast on heaven the blame.
O blindly wander, if thou wilt!
And break from virtue's rule,
But add not blasphemy to guilt,
And doubly play the fool."

Filthy rags may be made beautiful and useful. Paper is manufactured out of them; and what is fairer than a new sheet of paper? It is useful, too. We could hardly do without it. By it we communicate with each other. Through it, the good, the clever, the wise convey their thoughts to us. Nay, the Bible itself was once filthy rags. Wonderful feat! through what were once "filthy rags" my God speaks to me.

The worst men may be pardoned and made useful. There is "a Fountain for uncleanness." Christ can forgive and purify the vilest. "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." Augustine was a dissipated youth, revelling in vice, but he was saved. Bunyan was so wicked that he actually tried to find out a new sin, but he was renewed. Read the "Confessions" of the former, and the "Grace Abounding" of the latter, and you will exclaim, "Here are filthy rags cleansed!" It is said of two useful and eminent living preachers that one was once an actor, and the other a prize-fighter. Yes, "useful preachers;" for very useful may a converted sinner become. Who can tell the thousands and thousands who have been comforted, strengthened, brought to Christ by the Epistles of St. Paul? Yet he spoke of himself as "the chief" of transgressors. The "Pilgrim's Progress" has aided a host of pilgrims on their way to heaven; but it was written by one who, according to his own acknowledgment, had been a notorious offender. John Newton was not only the means of great spiritual good while he lived, but now he is dead his beautiful hymns are the source of help to numbers; nevertheless, Newton, in allusion to his former depraved life, called himself "the African blasphemer."

My friend, your character may be not only a rag, but a filthy rag.

You may have been very bad indeed. But if you will go to Christ and say, "Create in me a clean heart," He will do so. You are not too wicked to be pardoned and purified. Blessed be God, He is very forbearing and forgiving. Seek Him, and you will one day be "whiter than snow," and "without fault before the throne."

Rags have to be torn before they are good for much. When brought to the paper-mill they are pulled to bits and reduced to shreds. This is necessary. Without it they cannot be converted into proper material. Something of a kindred kind occurs to most people ere they are made spiritually clean. Trouble tears up their peace. Their comfort is, for a time, destroyed. So prone are we to forget God and the soul, that there are few of us who do not need trial. Sorrow has brought to Christ many a man and woman who otherwise would never have sought Him. This is one of the reasons of affliction. Our Divine Friend takes no pleasure in grieving us, but it is absolutely needful in order that we may turn to Him. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction"—that is God's biography of nearly all His people. Reader, how fares it with you? You have trouble, are you getting good from it? Is it leading you to the Saviour? Come to Him. Let not suffering be lost on you.

TO EVERY READER.

Reader, whosoever you are, we would testify to you of the grace and mercy that is in Jesus Christ.

Man has gone far from God; he has sinned, has wandered, has rebelled, has resisted, has rejected, has despised, has spurned His love, His truth, His law, and His righteousness. And all the justice and holiness of the Most High God burns and flames against the sin that works disorder and ruin in His universe. He loves righteousness and hates iniquity; and He teaches us that "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

We may think lightly of sin. It may be the sport of worldlings, as it is the mock of fools; but God has other thoughts concerning it. And He has revealed what He thinks of sin, in acts and words that we cannot misunderstand. For the sake of sin, He has blighted, even cursed the ground, condemned the race to death, and rolled a flood of mourning, lamentation, and woe over the world for nigh six thousand years. On account of sin, He has deluged the earth, burned Sodom, overthrown Tyre, buried Nineveh, destroyed Babylon, desolated Jerusalem, scattered Israel, and brought swift and terrible destruction upon the guilty nations of the earth. On account of sin, He has spared not His own Son, when sin was laid upon Him,

but has bidden the sword to awake against His Shepherd and His Fellow, and smite the Shepherd and scatter the sheep abroad.

Lost Eden, the deluge, Sodom and Gomorrah, the miseries of a ruined race, and the cross of the Son on Calvary, tell us what God thinks about sin. Do we doubt? Do we ask further information? We shall find it in the lake of fire and brimstone, the second death; "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Such then are God's thoughts concerning sin. And when all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, then He undertook to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell. He loved the world, and gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Man was wandering in the wilderness; He came to seek him. Man was sick; He came to heal him. Man was bound; He came to deliver him. Man was ruined; He came to restore Him. Man was defiled; He came to cleanse him. Man was dead; He came to revive him. Man was lost; He came to save him. God's law was dishonoured; He came to fulfil it; its penalty was incurred, and He came to endure its bitterest pangs, that He might "redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." And without our request, without our knowledge, without our co-operation, Christ has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, that by His stripes we might be for ever healed. He has suffered for our sins; He has redeemed us from the curse; He has made peace through the blood of His cross; He has brought life, and joy, and salvation to our hand; and He now asks us to accept pardon, to accept salvation, to accept Him, and to accept to-day.

Will we do this? There is but one alternative. We must accept or reject Him. There is no middle ground. We must embrace the offered salvation, or face the terrible question, "How shall we escape?" We must accept Jesus Christ, God's offered Saviour, as our Redeemer, Captain, Brother, Friend, our all and in all, or we must spurn His mercy, despise His grace, reject His love, tread underfoot His blood, and perish beneath His wrath.

KEEPING THE HEART.

I KNOW an ancient fortress which one brave man could have held against a host. Perched on the summit of a lofty rock, around which the sea goes foaming, and parted from the mainland by a dizzy *chasm, over* which a narrow arch, hanging like a thread in mid-air,

is thrown, that old castle stood in other days impregnable. There was but one way of approach, and that such as one man could hold against a thousand. As might be inferred from these words of Scripture, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," it is otherwise with us. With appetites and passions, each of which may be made an instrument of sin, our hearts lie open on many sides to attack. Take, for example, the most innocent of these appetites, that of hunger. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," says the wise man, praying as much against the first as the second; because, though happily we may know nothing of it, it is difficult for a hungry man to be an honest man. The empty sack, as the proverb says, cannot stand upright; and he tempts the poor through his appetite who used it to tempt our Lord Himself, saying to Jesus when He was an hungered, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." In this, as in other ways, Satan tried with fiery darts every part of our Champion's armour; and only failed because, as Jesus Himself said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me!" We cannot say so. Like traitors lurking within a beleaguered city, our natural corruptions are ready to open the gates and betray us to the enemy. Hence he who would keep his heart from evil, keep it pure and holy, must plant a sentinel at every avenue by which sin may find access there —guarding against none more than the little sins, as they are called, that are like the urchins who enter by the window and open the door for bigger thieves. The man of God has his eyes to keep, and so Job says, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes;" his tongue, and hence the exhortation, "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile;" his ears, and hence the warning, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err;" his feet, hence David says, "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Thy word." And since there is no gate of the five senses by which the enemy may not, unless the Spirit lift up a standard against him, come in like a flood, we have need to guard every port, and write over every portal, "Here there entereth nothing to hurt or to defile."

The work of grace is carried on within the heart. It is therefore the state of our affections more than our outward conduct that should occupy our attention and engage our most earnest prayers. Let me illustrate and enforce this by analogy. The burning thirst, the flushed cheek, the bounding pulse, the restless nights of fever, are but the symptoms of disease. That thirst, physicians may allay by cooling draughts; and opiates may dull the sense of pain, and shed sleep and sweet oblivion on the eyes of the weary sufferer. The symptoms are alleviated, but the disease is not arrested—the

evil is but masked, not mastered. And that is all which is achieved in the *reformation* which sometimes passes for *regeneration;* in that outward improvement of habits and decorum of life which will never supply the place of sanctification in the judgment of a holy, heart-searching God. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." I once heard physicians say, as they stood baffled by the bedside of one fast posting on to death, "We can do nothing now but combat the symptoms." Ominous and fatal words! Divine grace, thanks be to God, does more. Let it reach the heart, and those works of the flesh, which are the outward symptoms of indwelling sin, will ere long pass away, like a plant which, cut at the root, droops, and withers, and dies. It is in the heart that the change is wrought for salvation; and there, as a building rising from its foundations, the work of sanctification is carried onward and upward to perfection. Cleanse this fountain, and purity will flow in all its streams. Let our heart be turned heavenward, and our members and affections, our powers, and time, and influence, will all follow and obey its movements—as from stem to stern, from her keel that ploughs the wave, to the masts that rake the sky, a ship obeys the hand of the steersman and the movements of the helm. Who, therefore, would grow in grace, would die daily to sin, would live daily to righteousness,—while they strive to keep their hands from doing wrong, and their ears from hearing and their lips from speaking evil, let them strive above all things to "keep their hearts with all diligence, since out of them are the issues of life."

How sad our state by nature is!
Our sin how deep it stains!
And Satan holds our captive minds
Fast in his slavish chains.

But there's a voice of sovereign grace
Sounds from the Sacred Word:
"Ho, ye despairing sinners, come,
And trust upon the Lord!"

My soul obeys th' Almighty call,
And runs to this relief;
I would believe Thy promise, Lord;
Oh, help my unbelief!

To the dear fountain of Thy blood,
Incarnate God, I fly;
Here let me wash my guilty soul
From crimes of deepest dye.

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

A RAILWAY STORY FROM GERMANY.

It was in a third-class carriage. She was a pleasant-faced young woman, going, I think, for the first time after her marriage, to visit her parents in her old home, to show them their two fine grandchildren. At least, this was the little history I built up for her in my own brain from a word or two that I heard between her and her young husband at the station, as he put her into the carriage with an affectionate farewell. I always watch with great interest the farewells and greetings of my fellow-travellers, and have a fashion of thinking out for myself the whole story of their previous lives from the little hints that I get in this way. It is to me as if I were permitted to open the second volume of an interesting romance, and allowed to read only one short scene in this, and asked to guess as nearly as possible from this one scene the previous course of the story and the characters of the actors in it.

The youngest child was an infant of about three or four months old—very quiet and good; and the other was a pretty, restless little girl of three, who could not be still a single moment, and kept the careful mother busy by her questions and wants and childish prattle. She was not at all bashful, and soon talked to us also in such a natural, coquettish, condescending way, that we were quite in love with the charming little lassie, and begged her mother not to check her innocent advances to us.

When we had been travelling together for two or three hours, and began to feel quite like old acquaintances, while the train was going at full speed, the mother half rose from her seat to place the little girl, who had left her place, again on the opposite seat. How it happened I have never understood; it was one of those accidents which seem impossible, and, in fact, only happen once in a hundred thousand times; but just as she stood half erect, holding her sleeping babe upon one arm, and her little frolicsome maiden somewhat awkwardly on the other, the little girl made one of her sudden quick movements, and in an instant she was gone from our eyes.

What a moment! The poor mother stood fixed and rigid in exactly the same attitude, her arm still bent as though around her child, gazing with wide-open, fixed eyes at the place whence she vanished. She seemed literally turned to stone; with the rest of us the case was almost the same. How long this lasted I do not know; doubtless it seemed to us much longer than it really was. Then the

young mother seemed to come to herself, and made a sudden movement as if she would spring through the window after her vanished darling, now far away. I caught her quickly and held her fast, while the kind young lady who sat opposite to me took the baby from her arms, and we all began to talk together, no one listening to the other, about what was to be done for her. Somehow we managed in our excitement to do all that was possible; the guard came, the train was stopped, and the mother, without speaking to one of us, or even looking at us, left the train, supporting herself on one arm of the sympathising guard, while he held the still sleeping baby fast in the other.

Of course the train must go with increased speed to make up for the moment of delay, so there was no chance for us to see more of the poor bereaved mother. "Telegraph to us at the next station," said one of the railroad functionaries to the guard. "Yes, yes, be sure to do it immediately," cried a dozen voices; for in some mysterious way the news of the accident had run through the train as if by electricity, and a long row of sympathising faces watched from the carriage the disappearing forms of the mother and the guard.

"It will take her half an hour to reach the spot, and it is just thirty-five minutes now to the next station," said the stout gentleman in the corner, taking out his watch and holding it open in his hand, his eyes fixed upon it. He had struck me as one of the most selfish and disagreeable old gentlemen possible; scarcely answering a polite question from a neighbour, and then in the shortest and gruffest manner possible; he had seemed completely absorbed by his newspaper and his snuff-box, not having noticed the little fairy in any way except to glance at her now and then with a savage expression as her clear, childish laugh had disturbed his reading. Now his whole soul seemed to be fixed on the watch before him, and he "chided the tardy flight of time" again and again in words more forcible than ornamental.

There was a young would-be dandy in one corner; light, straw-coloured gloves, a slender cane, an infant moustache, and an eye-glass stuck in one eye, seemed to be, in his opinion, tokens of vast superiority over the other travellers; and he spoke very little, except occasionally to make some supercilious remark, or ask some question about third-class travelling, apparently to produce on us the impression that he was a young nobleman, or prince, perhaps, in disguise, seeing for himself how ordinary mortals fared.

What a change had come over him now! The eye-glass hung dangling hither and thither; with the kid gloves, of which he had been so dainty, he had grasped the dusty facing of the door, and was straining his gaze first backward until the poor mother was no longer to be

seen, and then forward to the next station where the news was to meet us.

Now at last we are there; the train halts; and one of the guards runs quickly into the little office over which "Telegraph" is painted. Everybody who can possibly get his or her head out of the window on that side, thrusts it out. There is a moment of intense suspense; here comes the guard again with a dispatch in his hand; he stands about midway between the ends of the train, and begins to read it out in his clear, loud, official tones: "Child perfectly sound; alighted on a pile of straw in a field, not two feet from a stone wall!"

Then what a scene! Every man at the train-windows has his hat off in a moment, and is waving it and cheering as if he would split his throat; every woman is buried in her pocket-handkerchief, crying and laughing together. The stout old egotist and the vain young dandy have thrown their arms around each other, and are embracing with that heartiness that belongs to the sons of the Vaterland, although they never met before that morning. The stiff old maid in the corner has shaken my hands in both hers so many times that I feel they are quite sore.

All the inhabitants of the little village come running around the train. "What is it? Where is he? Is it the Kaiser himself, or is it the Kronprinz?" they ask in bewildered excitement at the sight of ours.

But all the Kaisers and Kronprinzes in Europe put together could not have aroused the flood of feeling that surged through that train. It was sympathy with a sentiment far older than loyalty—older than the kings to whom loyalty is due—which was stirring every heart; it was sympathy with a mother's love!

THE FOUR LITTLE WORDS.

My father lived in a cottage. As he was a poor man, with a large family and but little money, it was but an humble home that he could call his own. In the garden a few roses and pinks were to be seen in their season; the rest of the ground was used for potatoes, cabbages, and other useful things for the family.

One day my father's master gave him a few strawberry plants. These were placed in the best part of the garden, and tended with great care. In due time there were signs of fruit. "The plants promise very well," said my father; "I think they will bear this year."

Jane, my eldest sister, had been for a long time in bad health,

and my father said that he wished all the strawberries to be kept for her. She could take very little food, and he was glad to get anything to which she took a fancy, if he could find the money to buy it. As the strawberries would cost nothing, and as we all knew they would please my sister, we agreed that we would not taste a single one—all should be saved for her.

As often as I came home from the fields in the evening I went to see how the strawberries were getting on, and looked at them with a longing desire to taste them. At last they were just ripe, and father said that in about two days they would be fit to be gathered, and that he was sure there would be enough to fill a saucer.

Early in the morning of that day when the fruit was to be picked, I got up before the rest of the family were awake, and the wicked thought came into my mind that I would go slily into the garden and taste them. "A few will not be missed," said I to myself. Slowly and softly I passed downstairs, and, opening the garden-door, I stood by the strawberries. Oh, how fresh and nice they looked so early in the morning!

There were, I was sure, twenty that were quite ripe. How many could I take without their being missed? Perhaps two, or five. As I gazed upon them my sinful desires grew until I was ready to take at least half of them.

I looked up at the window of the room where my parents slept, and then at the little room where dear Jane lay; there was no one to be seen. So, stooping down, my fingers were in a moment on one of the largest and ripest, when the thought darted into my mind, "Suppose they should be missed, and I am asked if I took them, what could I say?"

I quickly rose up, and was about to return into the house, when my evil heart said, "Oh, your father will not suspect that you were the thief; he will think that some strange boy got over the palings at night and stole the fruit!"

This bad thought made me bold, and I went back to the strawberry-bed. Again I fixed my eyes on the window, and looked around me. There was no one moving. All was quite silent, except the twitter of the sparrows on the cottage thatch, and the songs of the lark as it flew up to the sky. My hand once more touched the fruit, when these four little words darted into my mind: "Thou God seest me." These words saved me from the sin I was about to commit. It was almost as though I had heard them spoken aloud, "My father does not see me, but God does; His eyes are upon me now." I sprang upon my feet, and got back into my room without any one in the family having seen me.

In about an hour after this time I saw my father go into the

garden to gather the strawberries. He took all that were quite ripe, and when poor Jane came downstairs they were placed before her in a pink saucer. When she saw them a sweet smile came over her pale face. My father looked happy; Polly, my younger sister, looked happy; we were all happy as we saw how they pleased her and refreshed her parched lips. Then how glad I was that I had not taken them, and that my hands had been kept from stealing! Yes, it was that thought, "Thou God seest me," that held me back from doing wrong in the hour of danger.

"Where are those words to be found?" I said. "Are they the text of a sermon I have heard, or part of a Sunday-school lesson I have learned?" I was almost sure they were in the Bible, and I made up my mind to find them.

That day I had to look after Farmer Dobson's sheep, and I asked my sister Jane to lend me her Bible to take with me to the field, so that, while the sheep were feeding, I might sit down and seek for those four little words.

And do you know where I found them? They were in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Genesis, in an account of Hagar, who fled from her mistress into a desert place. As she sat by the side of a well the angel of the Lord met her and told her to go back to her mistress. Then she called the name of the angel who spake to her, "Thou God seest me." She was out of the path of duty, and these words kept her, as they did me, from going farther in the way that was wrong and full of danger.

At night, when we all met at family prayer, my father read a chapter from the New Testament. There was one part of it which was about a good man, Nathanael, to whom Jesus said that He had seen him under the fig-tree. Now the good man, who perhaps had been praying under the shady branches, knew that he had been quite alone, and when he heard what Jesus said, he cried out, "Master, Thou art the Son of God!"

After my father had read the chapter, he said to us, "Do not forget, dear children, that God our Saviour sees you always. This is a sad thought to the sinner, but not so to those who love Jesus. If we have gone to Him in faith for pardon of our sins, and if the grace of the Holy Spirit has changed our hearts, leading us to repent of sin and to keep His holy law, it is a thought full of comfort. He sees us in all our times of trouble and danger, and we know that He looks upon us in love, and will not forsake those who trust in Him. Let the words, 'Thou God seest me,' cheer you in duty, encourage you in prayer, and keep you from sin."

Now it did seem very strange to me that my father should use these words. It, however, served to fix them more deeply on my

mind; and many a time since then the thought of the all-seeing eye of God has kept me from the road that leads to death.

Will you, reader, think of them also? God always sees you. All things—past, present, and to come—everything that has been, that now is, and that shall be—are seen by Him at once. All that are in heaven, and all that are on earth, are beneath His eye. Some think that if they can get out of the sight of men, they may sin as they please, but there is no place where they can hide themselves from God. The broad daylight and the dark night are alike to Him. In the deep forests and in the caves and dens of the earth God is there. He sees all that can be seen; He knows all that can be known. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see Him? saith the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 24). "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13).

Would you then resist evil and overcome sin?—would you do what is right, and find comfort when you go to the house of God, or kneel down to pray at home?—ask of the Holy Spirit to apply these four little words to your heart, "Thou God seest me!"

Varieties.

ALWAYS READY.—A pious minister was seized with a complaint in his throat, and some days passed before he applied for medical aid. When the physician came to visit him, he was sitting in the midst of his family. After inspecting the state of his throat, his medical friend asked him to accompany him into the adjoining apartment, and there told him, that if he had any worldly matters to settle, it would be necessary to do so without delay, as he had not many hours to live—mortification having already begun. On receiving this appalling and so unexpected information, the good man lifted his eyes to heaven, saying, "Well, I had no idea I was so near my heavenly home." This was, indeed, living by faith. What an elevated tone of spirituality, what a realising impression of divine things, must have existed in that mind, by which such feelings could be experienced in circumstances so peculiarly trying! Where are the principles to be found, but in the revelation of Divine mercy, capable of supporting the soul and filling it with holy composure at so sudden and unexpected a call to leave all we love below, and pass into that vast futurity which lies before us?—*J. A. James.*

THE EDDYSTONE LIGHTHOUSE.

Not many days ago we were at Plymouth. One evening we went to look at the Sound. The scene was beautiful. Standing on a lofty cliff, we had a wide view. A number of steamers and sailing vessels lay at anchor; here and there a little pleasure-yacht glided slowly along. The famous breakwater stretched across the sea, not far from the shore. What a triumph of art! Who can gaze at it without admiration? Few achievements of engineering are more wonderful. It seemed a mere thin mark rising above the waves, but it is indeed much more. Broad and deep down lies a mass of solid masonry, whose construction occupied seventy years. No child's play sufficed to construct a reef which should withstand the mighty force of billows and breakers. But there was something that awakened in us greater interest than this. We stared into the dim distant horizon in order to find out another renowned object. It is not easily discovered by the naked eye. At last we succeeded. We beheld it. What? Well, it is eleven miles from land, and appeared very small. If we must express it in our own way, it gave one the idea of a bit of stick or a lead-pencil stuck in the sea. Ah! that was the Eddystone lighthouse. Noble building! To see it unmoved is, surely, almost impossible. All of us feel a kind of affection for it. Indifference would argue both a silly mind and a selfish heart. Thrice honoured be the ocean-bound tower which has preserved so many lives!

Let us make the Eddystone a preacher. It symbolises Christ. There is much in His and its work much alike. It tells of danger. Rocks are near. Before it was built, many a ship struck on them. Lives were lost. The clear, bright flame that now sends its radiance far across the tumultuous waves bids the mariner keep away. It warns him to give the spot as wide a berth as he can. Jesus, too, sounds an alarm. He points out peril. Sin is destructive. Wrong-doing must lead to misery; unbelief and wickedness end in ruin. To disobey the Divine law is to lay up for ourselves "wrath against the day of wrath." However much men may try to persuade themselves to the contrary, transgression produces shame and misery here, unspeakable suffering hereafter. Such is the message of our Redeemer. Strange to say, some are angry at it. They resent it. They complain of Christ as uncharitable and severe. Uncharitable! Is it uncharitable for the medical man to be honest and let his patient know when he is seriously ill? Severe! Is it severe on the part of a watchman to raise an alarm if he finds a house on fire? Neither is the conduct of our Lord lacking in wisdom and kindness. Indeed, it would have been unwise and unkind had He not put the matter urgently and solemnly before us. The soul is too precious to

be trifled with. The interests at stake are such as to justify the most repeated and emphatic warnings: "Except ye repent, ye shall perish;" "Flee from the wrath to come." It is love that prompts these words.

The Eddystone was not erected without great toil, patience, and even suffering. Serious risks were run. When the foundations were being constructed Death seemed to start upon the builders with hand upraised, and ready to smite them low. On one occasion, in consequence of help from the mainland being delayed, their lives were in the most imminent peril. The invaluable beacon was paid for in more than money—even hard labour, and heroic doing. And how are we saved? Through the sufferings of Christ. "By His stripes we are healed." Pardon is bestowed through His death. He is our substitute. He took the wretched traitor's place. Our guilt he did not, could not, assume, but His agonies deliver from present and eternal ruin all who trust in Him. Some time ago a war raged in India between the English and a native monarch named Tippoo Saib. On one occasion several English officers were taken prisoners, among them one named Baird. One day a native officer brought in fetters to be put on each of the prisoners, the wounded not excepted. Baird had been severely wounded, and was suffering much. A grey-haired officer said to the official, "You do not think of putting chains upon that wounded young man?" "There are just as many pairs of fetters as there are captives," was the answer, "and every pair must be worn." "Then," said the officer, "put two pairs on me. I will wear his as well as my own." Baird lived to regain his freedom, but the generous friend died in prison. He wore two pairs of fetters! But what if he had worn the fetters of all in the prison? What if, instead of being a captive himself, he had been free and great, and had quitted a glorious palace to live in this loathsome dungeon, to wear their chains, to bear their stripes, to die in their stead? Such a thing has been done. For all who receive the grace of God's Son the chains are struck off, and the prison is thrown wide open.

Let all remember this. Sinner, think of it. Can you be indifferent to such marvellous goodness? Will you run away from love so deep and true? Do not be careless of your own salvation, since Christ was so anxious about it as to die for you. Seek Him. Forsake your evil course. Pray for pardon. Make the gracious Lord your Saviour. Saint, ponder often the sufferings of God's Son. They are far greater than any language can tell. Words are weak in describing them. As Maclaurin says: "We may paint the outward appearance of His sufferings, but not the inward bitterness or invisible causes of them. Men can paint the cursed tree, but not

the curse of the law that made it so. Men can paint Christ bearing the cross to Calvary, but not Christ bearing the sins of many. We may describe the nails piercing His sacred flesh, but who can describe the arrows of the Almighty?" Recall all this when you are tempted to forego self-denial. Never can you endure for the Master what He has endured for you. Did He die for your good? Then do you for His glory die to ease and self-indulgence.

The value of the Eddystone lies, to no small extent, in its perpetuity. Its immense strength preserves it from destruction. Storms fail to hurl it down. There it stands. Day and night it warns the sailor. A few years ago it was invisible from land for some days. Telescopes failed to sight it. Much anxiety was felt. So long did it remain unseen that it was at last thought to have fallen. "The Eddystone is down!" Such was the brief, startling telegram that found insertion in the morning papers. But, thank God, the alarm was a false one. Better weather came, the atmosphere got clearer, and the welcome, familiar pillar was again recognised lifting its friendly form far above the wild waste of waters.

It is so with the great Deliverer. Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Other benefactors die. He ever lives. "I am the Lord; I change not." Benevolent institutions may fail. His promise is perpetual and eternal. "Lo, I am with you alway." Was He with John on lonely Patmos? He is with every solitary disciple now. Did He visit the house of Zacchæus? He is a guest in our homes too. Had Martha and Mary the joy of His society in their quiet abode at Bethany? Our families are not without Him. Were Andrew and Peter watched by Him as they flung their nets into the Red Sea of Galilee? The places in which we toil are likewise the objects of His notice. All hail to such a Friend! Never need we be without consolation, sympathy, encouragement, for "the Master is come." He is "not far from every one of us."

GOD'S ANGER.

God's anger against sin is most terrible; and yet it has a severe and awful beauty which fills the pious soul with reverence and love.

The pathway of God's anger issues from the bosom of His holiness. When sin first allured the angels from their just allegiance, the Divine anger was revealed in sternness and strength. When man

first departed from God, He drove him from paradise, appointed a flaming sword, set over him the executioner death, and from the bosom of successive ages even to the precincts of the resurrection poured down the terrors of dissolution. When the guilty race sank in universal corruption, He unsealed the fountains of the great deep upon the polluted world. When Sodom reeked in crime, He swept the guilty plain of its cities for ever. When Egypt rebelled, He called around him the ten infuriate plagues. When Canaan had filled the measure of her guilt, He led forth His people by the way of the Red Sea and the wilderness to drive out its inhabitants before them. When Nineveh exalted the offensive thrones of her gods; when Babylon reared her persecuting head; when Tyre flaunted in all her pride; when Jerusalem hardened herself against the Messiah; when Rome heated the boiling cauldron against the saints, the angel of the Lord strode from city to city, and from age to age, holding over them the cup of judgment, and pouring upon each its appropriate doom. When our great Redeemer reached the predestined spot where He was to take the place of sinful men, to be numbered with the transgressors, and give His back to the smiters, standing in the stead of the guilty, then the anger of the Lord appeared. The earth quaked, the sun hid his face, and the cry of the atoning Lamb sounded far and fearfully, as, deserted by the Father, He bowed His head in death.

Yet in all these acts of dread commission the anger of the Lord was righteous. No malice flamed in His eye; no cruelty stained His hand; no passion burned in His heart. He stood in severe and awful beauty! The tear of compassion trembled in His eye, the voice of love was heard above the thunders of judgment, and the universe admired the beauty of holiness as it shone in the anger of the Lord.

"I HAVE NO TIME TO ATTEND TO THESE THINGS!"

Dear reader, have not these words often escaped your lips when any Christian friend has called your attention to the salvation of your soul? Perhaps you are the father or mother of a large family, who depend for their subsistence entirely upon your own industry: in these circumstances I am ready to acknowledge you have no time to spend on trifles; but is it not true that you spend time daily in evil thoughts, much time in vain and useless conversation with your neighbours? Am I exceeding the truth when I say you spend all your spare time in forgetfulness of God? Know you not that this

very inattention, though you had committed no other sin, procures the condemnation of the soul: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver" (Ps. l. 22). So you see that you have only to forget God, to be eternally forgotten by Him. With this awful alternative before your eyes, are you serious in urging the excuse at the top of this paper? Is it a statement which the omniscient Searcher of hearts knows to be true? Does it satisfy your own conscience? Could you lay down your head on the pillow of death, and, with the judgment-seat and an impartial Judge in full view, console yourself with this, "I had no time for these things"? Ah no! So far from this, conscience will bring back to your recollection days, weeks, months, and years of golden moments for ever fled; and your spirit, stung by the agonising reflection, may utter forth the despairing wail of the hopeless sinner, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the hour when it was said a child is conceived." Do you say, "Oh, I don't intend to be always in this state—as soon as my circumstances will permit, I am resolved to give more time to this matter than I have done"? But leaving out of view for the present the uncertainty of human existence (which this apology entirely overlooks), it appears to me that you are labouring under a fatal delusion as to the amount of time necessary to settle the difference between God and your soul; you think that before you can be reconciled to God, delivered from the love of sin here and its punishment hereafter, you must first spend a long period of time in attending to religious duties and striving to make yourself better, by which God may be induced to pardon your sins and receive you into His friendship, because you consider you will then be in a fitter state to receive forgiveness.

My dear reader, this view of the way of salvation, which is so very prevalent among those who know not God, and even among many professors of religion, is not God's way. Just look at the serious errors it contains. It assumes that you have a previous work to perform, and a very arduous one, before you can be in a state to receive pardon from God; it places self in the foreground, and is therefore man-glorifying; it does not sufficiently recognise, as a first step, reliance on the finished work of Jesus Christ, and it alone, without one single meritorious act, as the only way to be saved, and is therefore Christ-dishonouring; and, finally, it tacitly ascribes to God a certain degree of unwillingness to receive the sinner now,—all of which is opposed to the revealed will and character of God. What then, do you ask, is the way God hath made known whereby I may by saved? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy month and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou

shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Rom. x. 8–11). "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). From these and numberless other passages which might be quoted, it is evident that, if you wish to be saved at all, you must at once and for ever cease your self-justifying efforts, and take salvation as a free gift (1 John v. 11). Abandon, I beseech you, your soul-killing delusions about previous worthiness and preparation. Know you not that every act of this kind performed before coming to Christ is sinful?—because it springs from a selfish desire to render to God a kind of partial satisfaction for your sins, and an unwillingness to believe that Jesus has already borne the punishment due to your sins "in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24). Oh, flee from all such refuges of lies; believe the great truth that God is satisfied, His law magnified, and nothing left for you to do but to receive a finished salvation. And do it now.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness madly dream:
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of Him."

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). And now, my fellow-sinner, remember God means what He says in that passage last quoted. He says *now*, which means that at this very moment, while your eyes are running over these lines, He is in Christ already reconciled, and is waiting, and even beseeching you to be reconciled to Him. Suffer this heavenly truth once to fill your soul, and then, instead of pleading that you have no time for these things, you will arise and go to your justly-offended but forgiving Father, and with the language of an entirely dedicated one upon your lips you will exclaim,

"Take my body, spirit, soul—
Only Thou possess the whole."

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

WAITING FOR FATHER.

How fast the snow came down! First in large, feathery flakes, dancing and fluttering through the air, then faster and faster, until all the brown grasses were hidden. Yet it never stopped for that, but all day and all night it fell, until it almost seemed as if the poor, wee bit of a house, standing alone on the great prairie, would be hidden too.

Such a lonesome-looking little house it was, with the snowdrifts piled, in some places, almost up to the eaves, and the rough winds howling around it, like a pack of hungry wolves.

It was pleasant enough there in the summer-time, with the tall corn opening its silken tassels to the sun; the sweet flowers blossoming all about it, and the morning-glories climbing to look in at the windows, and most of all because of the happy faces of the three little children that looked out. They were looking out now, to be sure, all three of them, Bennie and Sadie and baby Winnie; but they looked so very sad, it seemed as if they could hardly be the same children who used to play about the door.

"Oh, mamma, will it ever, ever stop snowing?" Bennie called at last, to the poor, pale mother, who was trying to patch one of the baby's worn-out shoes.

"Yes, dear," the mother answered, holding the little shoe nearer to her eyes to see better, perhaps because the room was so dark; perhaps because the tears would sometimes come into them, though she bravely kept them from falling.

"I thought may be God had forgot all about us," Bennie said, with a sigh.

"Dod fordot!" chimed in Sadie. "Dod don't ever fordot!"

"No, but—it does almost seem so now," Bennie said, dolefully.

The mother looked at her children with a sharp anguish in her heart, that must not put itself into words. Bennie was weak and pale, the fair face, pinched with hunger, growing thinner and paler day by day; while Sadie, resolute little Sadie, had lost the roses from her cheeks, and even baby Winnie wore a look of grieved wonder; for how could she understand why mamma had no more bread to give her starving little ones? No more bread!

"Why don't papa come?" Sadie said. "I'm so hungry! Do you s'pose he's truly coming, now, somewhere, mamma?"

"Yes, darling, mamma thinks he must be here soon," she answered,

going to the window, and trying to look out through the blinding storm.

But oh! how her heart failed her as she thought of the long distance he must come through the terrible storm. Would he, could he, ever reach home, after all? she asked herself.

He had gone for food to the nearest town, ten miles away; gone on foot, for long before their trusty old Dolly had been sold for a pitiful sum, to obtain money to buy bread; and after that, faithful Maggie the cow. For a long time the father and mother had put aside part of their share for the children, bravely fighting want and hunger, until at last they knew they must beg for help or starve.

Early the day before, the father had started out, telling them to keep up courage, for he would bring them plenty of bread that night. "Plenty of bread!" cried Bennie. "Why, mamma, can we have all we want? Oh! how nice that'll be!" Bennie knew that for many weeks he had often been very hungry, though sometimes it seemed as if he could not touch the little piece of coarse brown bread, when he saw how wistfully Sadie and dear baby Winnie watched him while he slowly ate his share, after they had eagerly devoured their own. And often, when the mother did not see, he hastily broke off part of his and divided it between them.

The night had come, but not the father, and now another day was passing, yet still they waited and watched in vain. The mother had given the last crusts to the children, and now there was not a mouthful of anything to eat in the house; and when baby Winnie cried, "More! mamma, more!" she could only take her in her arms and try to divert her with some of the old "Mother Goose" rhymes, that pleased the children so much in happier days. When she told her, "This pig went to market," Winnie laughed for a minute—one of her sweet baby laughs. It had always seemed as if the wee darling were made up of sunbeams, and that there was nothing, in all the world, sweeter than her happy laughter.

But the little face grew sober now very quickly again, and she begged, so piteously, "More, mamma, more!" that it seemed to the poor mother, almost as if indeed "God had forgot."

The children grew weary of watching at the window, and while Sadie came and leaned against mamma, crying, "Oh, I'm so hungry! Why don't papa come?" Bennie lay down upon the bed, with no word of complaint, but so white and wan that the mother's heart was seized with sudden terror, and she cried to herself and to God, "My precious, precious boy! Must he die for want of food?" And yet the father did not come. And the hours seemed so long, the hours that brought nothing to the poor little lonely house but new want and keener hunger.

What could she do? the mother asked herself. Nothing! The nearest neighbour was three miles away, and to leave her babes and venture out in the storm would be only certain death. Nothing but wait, and beseech the good God for help. Oh, how they prayed!—the famishing mother and her little ones. Even baby Winnie clasped her tiny hands, trying to ask "Our Father" for bread.

Yes, one thing more the half-despairing mother could do. She could help to make the hours seem shorter to the weary, hungering children by telling them stories. So she told them story after story, while Bennie lay and listened with wide-open eyes, and Sadie divided her sympathy between the children in the stories and herself; for she could not help the tears falling very fast, and sighing to herself, "So hungry! Oh, mamma, *when* will papa come?" And still the mother answered, "Pretty soon, I hope; and you will be papa's brave little girl,won't you, darling?" And then resolute Sadie, curling herself up on the bed by Bennie, tried, oh, so very hard, to be patient and brave. Sadie, only four years old, and starving for bread!

At last the night came again, and the hungry children sobbed themselves to sleep, while the mother sat and watched and waited for the father who did not come. Bennie tossed restlessly, moaning in his dreams, and twice Sadie and Winnie woke and begged for something to eat. Sadie sat up in bed, staring out into the night, with half-wild eyes. "Hark!" she said, "I heard somefin'. I dess it's papa, now!" But no, it was only the rough winds blustering about the house. A long time the mother carried baby Winnie to and fro, to quiet her, though she herself was ready to faint from lack of food.

Oh, the unspeakable agony of that night! How she remembered the old happy home of plenty, knowing neither want nor fear, while the cruel wolf of starvation was now at her door!

So the long terrible night went by, and the first light wakened the little ones. "Oh, mamma! I dreamed I had lots and lots of bread, so much!" Sadie said, holding her hands wide apart. "Where's papa? Ain't papa come yet? I dreamed he had;" and baby Winnie cried, "Papa! papa!" but Bennie only opened his blue eyes languidly, while a faint sigh fluttered through the pinched lips.

"Oh, Bennie, my boy, my precious boy!" the mother cried, kissing again and again the wan face of her child, as if she could call back the warmth and life that seemed fast going out. "Wake up, darling. You know we must watch for papa, now it is morning."

Then baby Winnie put her arms around his neck, and laid her soft cheek to his, lisping, "Poo' Bennie! poo' Bennie!" while Sadie cried, "Bennie! Bennie! don't you 'member papa said he'd bring us lots of bread? I dreamed all 'bout it, and"—she gave a cry of delight—

"Papa! oh, papa!" So he had come at last, the dear father watched and waited for so long.

How the glad light came back into Bennie's sweet blue eyes, and how Sadie and Winnie shouted and clapped their hands at sight of the precious food! And I'm sure no breakfast ever tasted better than did theirs to them.

In all the land there were no more grateful hearts than theirs that day; none that thanked "Our Father" more fervently for his loving care. When the father told them how the good God had kept him from perishing in the storm—when twice he had lost his way on the prairie, and wandered many miles from home—Sadie, with the pride of a very little woman, cried, "I knew so, Bennie, I knew Dod don't fordot!"

"I LEAVE IT ALL WITH JESUS—THAT'S WHAT I DO!"

DURING the last few days of her illness, Annie W—— gave wonderful witness to the power of the truth. She was a sweet child of fourteen, and had found the Lord a few months previously at our meetings. As her wasted form at length became too weak to leave the sofa, she would send for one and another of the neighbours to come in, to whom she spake of Jesus and His great salvation. One day a dear unconverted woman called to see her, and said—

"You are very ill, my dear."

"Yes," she replied, "but I shall soon get well."

The poor woman shook her head at she looked at Annie's mother, saying, "Poor dear thing; she cannot possibly get well. No, she will never get over it."

Then turning to the dear child, she asked, "Don't you know, my dear, that you are going to die?"

"I know I am going to live," she smilingly replied; "I know I shall soon be with Jesus in heaven, to live with Him."

"Oh, how can you tell that, my dear? We must not be *too* sure yet, you know," said the poor woman.

"Oh," said Annie, as she pointed with her thin finger to a printed paper which she had pinned on the wall, "that's what I do! that's what I do!"

"Indeed," said the neighbour, "I can't read, you know. Mrs. W——, what is it?"

The mother read the title, "I leave it all with Jesus."

"Yes," said Annie, "that's what I do; but look at my dear mother weeping. Isn't it wrong? Such a trouble as I am to her here, and the Lord is going to take me to Himself."

And He did. A few days after, Annie's father, who was a brewer's drayman, came to my house to thank me, as he said, for teaching his child "how to go to heaven."

My readers will like the copy of a hymn that was so dear to Annie.

"I leave it all with Jesus,
Then wherefore should I fear?
I leave it all with Jesus,
And He is ever near!

I leave it all with Jesus,
Trust Him for what must be:
I leave it all with Jesus,
Who ever thinks of me.

I bring it all to Jesus,
In calm believing prayer:
I bring it all to Jesus,
And I love to leave it there!

Each tear, each sigh, each trouble,
Each disappointment,—all
I love to give to Jesus,
Who loves to take them all."

And now, dear friend, can you leave all with Jesus? Have you brought your sins and sorrows to Him? If not, come for a new heart, come to Jesus. May you cast yourself on Jesus, just as you are, and soon be able to say with Annie W——:

"I left it all with Jesus,
Long ago;
All my sins I brought Him,
And my woe.
When by faith I saw Him
On the tree,
Heard His still small whisper,
'Tis for thee,'
From my heart the burden
Roll'd away—
Happy day!

I leave it all with Jesus,
For He knows
How to steal the bitter
From life's woes,
How to gild the tear-drop
With His smile,
Make the desert garden
Bloom awhile:
When my weakness leaneth
On His might,
All seems light."

Varieties.

"How came I by my Wicked Heart?"—A caviller once asked Dr. Nettleton, an eminent American minister, "How came I by my wicked heart?" "That," he replied, "is a question which does not concern you so much as another, namely, how should you get rid of it? You have a wicked heart, which renders you entirely unfit for the kingdom of God; and you must have a new heart, or you cannot be saved; and the question which most deeply concerns you is, how you shall obtain it." "But," said the man, "I wish you to tell me how I came by my wicked heart?" "I shall not," replied Dr. Nettleton, "do that at present; for if I could do it to your entire satisfaction, it would not in the least help you towards obtaining a new heart. The great thing for which I am solicitous is, that you should become a new creature, and be prepared for heaven." As the man manifested no disposition to hear anything on that subject, but still pressed the question how he came by his wicked heart, Dr. Nettleton told him that his condition resembled that of a man drowning, while his friends are attempting to save his life. As he rises to the surface of the water, he exclaims, "How came I here?" "That question," says one of his friends, "does not concern you now. Take hold of this rope." "But how came I here?" he again asks. "I shall not stop to answer that question now," replies his friend. "Then I'll drown," says the infatuated man, and, spurning all proffered aid, sinks to the bottom.—*Dr. Nettleton's Remains.*

A Solemn Fact.—Our opinions, experience, and practice will have to do with us beyond the narrow limits of time. They will have an influence upon our state when time itself shall be no more. Yes, when your body shall be mouldering in the grave. Yes, when the blast of the last trump shall be heard. Yes, when all shall appear in judgment, and shall stand before the great white throne. Yes, when the final separation shall take place between the righteous and the wicked. Yes, when as many millions of years shall have passed away as there are atoms in the universe. Then your present opinions, experience, and practice, will have to do with you. *Then*, if these shall be found dross, you will find yourself in hell for ever and ever! but if these are found genuine, you will find yourself happy—inexpressibly happy—in heaven. Reader, is not this a solemn fact?

ST. THOMAS'S DAY.

St. Thomas's Day is coming. Many will be glad when it arrives. We need hardly say why. It is a time at which charities are distributed. Men, women, and children flock to places where clothing will be given away. How it came to pass that December 21st should be fixed upon rather than any other period, we do not know.

The man whose name is connected with this day is worth attention. Justice is not done to him. There was much that was fine about him. We are ready enough to talk about his defects; do we always remember his excellences? He had them. Here is one—courage. What fearlessness he displayed! Nothing in the New Testament can greatly exceed the affectionate bearing displayed in one of his sayings, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." That was what he said. Noble disciple! he was quite prepared to abide by persecution and death itself for Christ's sake. Suffering with the Saviour was to him preferable to prosperity without Him. We wish that all who are ready to "cast a stone" at Didymus equalled him here.

As regards his unbelief, are we quite sure that we are right about it? Was he as faithless as we commonly suppose? He was not. We speak of him as if he were the only doubter among the apostles. This is wrong. When Christ had risen from the dead none of them believed at first. They thought the reports of the women who had seen Him were "idle tales." Moreover, when Jesus appeared to them, "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Thomas said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." But he *did* believe as soon as He saw Jesus: that was more than the others did. True, he wished for the evidence of touch, as well as that of sight. But he was better than his word, We are never told that he actually did put his "finger into the print of the nails." He was convinced without that. Afterwards, too, he made a grand confession. He said, "My Lord and my God." The fact is that none of the other disciples had ever used such strong words touching our Lord's dignity and divinity.

But it is to the Master's words on St. Thomas's Day that we want to call attention. How full of encouragement and warning they are! For instance: do they not teach us the course which we should pursue towards those who are in error? Thomas was mistaken, but mark the manner in which Christ acted. He was very gentle. Nothing harsh or severe was said. "Be not faithless, but believing." That was all. What a contrast to the conduct exhibited by many of His followers! Think of persecution. Millions have been cruelly

slain simply because they were supposed to be in error. That is not the Saviour's way. He is patient. He quietly puts before the mind of the sceptical apostle such proof as he needs. "Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side." Let us do the same. No matter in what respect others may differ from us, it is our duty to be forbearing. A heathen, who stood in a crowd in Calcutta, listening to a missionary disputing with a Brahmin, said that he knew which was right, though he did not understand the language: he knew that he was in the wrong who lost his temper first. For the most part that is a very accurate way of judging.

Well says a popular preacher, "Try to avoid debating with people. State your opinion, and let them state theirs. If you see that a stick is crooked, and you want people to see how crooked it is, lay a straight rod down by the side of it: that will be quite enough. But if you are drawn into controversy, use hard arguments and very soft words. Frequently you cannot convince a man by tugging at his reason, but you can persuade him by winning his affection. The other day I had the misery to need a pair of new boots; and though I bade the fellow make them large, I had to labour fearfully to get them on. With a pair of boothooks I had to toil like the men on board the vessel with Jonah, but all in vain. Just then my friend put in my way a little French chalk, and the work was done in a moment. Wonderfully coaxing was that French chalk. Always carry a neat packet of Christian persuasiveness, and you will soon discover the virtues of it." This is perfectly true. Men will be led where they will not be driven. A little patience goes a long way.

After He had gently rebuked Thomas, Jesus said to him, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." How striking! Nothing is more opposed to what we are at first disposed to think. Thus: many imagine that they would have been specially favoured if they could have lived when Christ did, and looked upon Him. "Oh, that I might have gazed upon His face! Surely if I could have glanced at His pure and loving countenance I should have loved and served Him better than I do now." That is how we feel. But we are wrong. Our Lord distinctly says that they are in a more privileged condition who have not seen. Reflection shows that He is right. Had we existed at the time of Christ we should have had the ignorance and prejudices of the Jews; and, in all probability, this would have prevented our understanding and appreciating Him as we do now. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" "These things understood not the disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him." Yes: it was not until He had passed away that even the apostles comprehended Him. There

can be little doubt that numbers of scholars in our Sunday-schools have clearer, truer views of our Lord, than those who often saw and heard Him.

"When in some wistful mood we say
'It had been easier to believe
Amid the light of Hebrew day;'
'Tis likely we ourselves deceive."

How may we best see a mountain? Certainly not by standing at the bottom of it. That will reveal little. Go some distance away if you would behold it to advantage. One, two, half-a-dozen or more miles off, its height and grandeur are most fully realised. As much may be said as regards nearness to Christ when He was on earth. We who are far removed in point of time have a better conception of Him than if our lot had been cast in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago.

The Saviour's declaration to Thomas casts light on another and most deeply interesting subject. We refer to happiness. He tells us how we may get it. "Blessed are they that have believed." Faith in Christ produces happiness. This deserves careful attention. It exposes a popular blunder. The great majority of people fancy that bliss is to be had in something outward. Money, fashionable raiment, and comfortable houses, influence over those around us, robust health, and a large circle of friends—these are held to be the source of happiness. "And are they not very good things?" asks one. Yes: they are all good in their way, and so far as they go. Mark, as far as they go, for they do not go far enough to produce real and lasting bliss. Thousands have them who are discontented and even miserable. He who, as the result of trust in Jesus, loves Him and does His will, is the only satisfied man. The words of the eminent always weigh with us: do they not? Well, what did a very eminent man lately say? The late Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform as a cure for bodily pain, remarked after he was converted, "My first happy Christmas—my only happy one!" Here was one renowned for learning, conspicuous for ability in a most important department of life, the pride of his profession, and the object of royal confidence, yet he declares that he never knew what bliss was until he began to serve the Redeemer. On the other hand, it is not difficult to point out, in the course of ordinary experience, people who, though poor, obscure, and afflicted, are full of peace and joy. A Puritan writer says, "The bride that hath good cheer within, and good music, and a good bridegroom with her, may be merry, though the hail chance to rattle upon the tiles without upon her wedding day." Even so, those who are the bride, "the Lamb's wife," to use a Scripture

term, can find pure and deep pleasure in the heavenly Bridegroom's presence, in spite of life's storms and trials.

Resolve, my reader, to make this happiness yours. Who would starve when loaves are offered? who would die when a doctor is near who can heal? Why then be so foolish as to remain destitute of abiding bliss when Jesus waits to bestow it? You are a sinner. Believe in His willingness to pardon, and pray Him to bestow it upon you. Do not doubt that He will fully and readily pardon those who, forsaking their sins, implore His mercy. Live under the influence of this great and glorious fact, and you will constantly prove how true were the words uttered by our Lord on St. Thomas's Day.

SUDDEN INFLUENCES.

It is the squall that upsets the boat, while the steady wind crowds hard upon it, but only drives it right along towards its destined port. The slow force of the steady current may press in vain against the dam, but once let the pent-up waters above it break away and come with a sudden burst, and it yields to the instant pressure and goes down before the torrent. The slow gentle action of the electric current is harmless and often healthful, but the concentrated flash and burning bolt smite to swift destruction.

So it is with sudden influences on the impulsive and impetuous nature of man. They approach stealthily and strike quickly. Unwatchful and unaware of the coming blow, we are overwhelmed and fall. Sometimes Satan strikes at a man as the lightning strikes out of the cloud. He sees not the smiting hand, he knows not of its presence until he feels the fiery blow. Then it is that human resolutions bend before the hot blast from hell. The struggle is often terrible.

Here is the wisdom of the divine Master, who bid us watch against the tempter's wiles. He that closely observes the on-coming gust furls his sails before the blast, lest his barque go down beneath the hurricane. A glance at womanly beauty took a good king off his feet in a moment, and lust and sorrow followed, The sight of the red wine suddenly arouses the drink-mania in the reformed drunkard: let him smell or taste, and he is gone. A hurricane of temptation sweeps him into the awful gulf of inebriety. Satan's most potent missiles are styled "darts." He hurls them quickly. Quick as thought he injected into Peter's mind the ignoble thought which led him to resist his Master's will and oppose His progress to the cross. (Matt. xvi. 22.) Quick as thought came the devil's lie into the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira. Even from a dear friend, or from some

other source we little dream, comes the provocation to sin. The sharp sudden retort angers the spirit of him on whose ear it falls. He might be able to stand calmly against the slow and visible approach of wrathful speech, but the darting tongue sets his own on fire, and strife, and passion, and sin come in the train. Sharp angry words are as a blast of powder, they tear and rend.

Guard against sudden evil influences. The impulsive nature is poor proof against their damning power, and even the slower and more steady soul may be taken unawares and fall from its steadfastness. The only safety is in watching. More spiritual battles are lost by unwatchfulness than by lack of valour. Many who fight well in battle are afterwards smitten to the ground in disgrace and defeat by the adversary's keen shaft during a single moment of unwatchfulness. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." We are traversing the enemy's ground. It therefore becomes us to move with caution and alertness. It would be terrible to be overcome and lost in sight of the gates of the almost recovered Paradise.

THE OLD SAD STORY.

I HAVE just returned from a sad visit, and yet, unhappily, it has not been the first one to which I have been called as a pastor. It was a visit to a merchant, to make some intercession for a young man who had been making too free with his employer's money. The erring youth is the only son of a widowed mother; he is her prop and staff, and has always been her joy and pride. Her life was bound up in the life of the lad. But now the "staff is broken, and the beautiful rod." She is drinking of that bitterest cup that can be pressed to a mother's lips—the gall and wormwood of an only son's disgrace. On inquiring the cause of the young man's fall I found that it was the old sad story. He had forsaken his place in the prayer-meeting (for he is a Church member), and had given his evenings to dangerous company. Presently he got into the toils of "the strange woman," "whose house is the way to hell."

Now this is no novel case. It is the old story of sensual temptation drawing a young man gradually from the rock of Christian principle into the "slippery places" of secret sin. For I have seldom seen a young Church member to backslide openly from his Christian profession without either a bottle, or a ball-room, or a bad woman being at the bottom of it. Sometimes the whole three are combined, for they are a trio that often go together. The pack of cards is also an ally that plays its part in the temptation in many cases.

While my heart is bleeding to-day over this sad catastrophe of

character (which I have so disguised as to avoid a painful recognition of the person alluded to), let me jot down a few impressions that I have gathered up in my daily labours for the welfare of young men.

1. The moral atmosphere of our cities and towns is saturated with poison. The air is charged with a growing mania to get money hastily, and to get it at all hazards. Old, safe, and sure methods of getting rich slowly are getting out of fashion. Sharp devices are resorted to, and some of them are wretchedly immoral. Competition runs high, and illegitimate methods are practised in order to "keep up" or "get ahead." In stripping for this mad race, conscience is cast aside.

2. Extravagance in dress, equipage, and social display, also taint the atmosphere; and too many professed Christians rush headlong with the crowd in this folly of the hour. This is the day of living for appearances and of walking in a vain show. This rage of extravagance is eating out the very core of society.

3. The decanter and the social glass are ruining our young men by regiments. There is a fashionable drinking-saloon within a few rods of the spot where I am now writing, which is killing more souls than some of our Sabbath-schools are saving. Men slip in there from brown stone houses, and youths are found there who see a wine-bottle quite too often on their fathers' tables. Until the parents take this great vital question of temperance in hand, and do their whole duty at home, all the laws in existence will not dam up the growing tide of dissipation and drunkenness.

4. I have room in this brief article to touch upon only a few of the many causes of demoralisation and danger to our youth. Going deeper down than anything I have named, lies a growing laxity of opinion in regard to the sinfulness of sin. Too many pulpits preach a rosewater theology which magnifies the "love of God," but ignores the awful guilt and turpitude of sin and its inevitable punishment. Loose views of sin and retribution are spreading fast. "Sugar plums are better than the rod" is the doctrine which one of the brilliant preachers of lax theology uttered lately. This is an age of "sugar-plum" teaching. But the God who loveth righteousness has taught us that the rod of correction is indispensable in our household and in our theology too. He often employs it Himself in His discipline of wisdom and of love. And all the time His voice is sounding out the old sad warning: "The way of transgressors is hard;" "The wages of sin is death."

These are among the thoughts awakened by the sorrowful scenes I witnessed to-day. They are not unworthy of being pondered, for I fear that the old sad story is not ended yet.

Narratives, Anecdotes, &c.

"I AM SORRY FOR JESUS!"

THIS is true which I am going to tell you—a simple tale, indeed; yet, perhaps, it may do you good.

A great many years ago lived a little girl named Louise. She was naturally a merry child, though fond of reading and studying; and, as she had no mother or sister, she probably spent more time alone than she would have done otherwise.

When about six years old she heard a sermon preached to children, not much of which she could understand; but one thought impressed her, that there was some great thing for a child to do before she could be saved, and that Jesus would be unhappy if she did not love Him.

That is the way she understood the sermon, and she thought about it often, for a long time afterwards; indeed, she never forgot it. One day, especially, when she had been harsh to her little brother, these thoughts troubled her, and as the evening drew near she felt very unhappy.

She went to the window and saw where the sun was setting. There were the most beautiful colours—gold, and crimson, and amethyst. The river and the hills also seemed burnished by the same. Upon one hill, not far off, every leaf seemed to quiver and glisten in this beautiful light. She wondered if this was not something like the light of heaven, and she said to herself, "Maybe it does, truly, come from heaven."

Louise had a dim idea that if she could climb that hill she would be nearer to heaven, and that, perhaps, God would hear her prayer better; for it, somehow, seemed to her that He never heard her prayers.

So she ran quickly to the hill, and climbing its side, sat down upon a stone. She wondered very much, as she looked at the grand and beautiful scene before her, why Jesus could ever be unhappy, and also what difference it made to Him what a child like her did or said, since He could make such splendid things.

By-and-by the colours faded, the light grew dim, and darkness began to appear. Then Louise cried aloud, not from fear, but from the troubles of her little heart. Soon she thought: "I wonder if Jesus feels like crying, too. I should feel so sorry for Him if He does. I would put my arms around Him and tell Him not to cry, if I could reach Him."

The poor little girl could not reach Him, but He could reach her, and He was watching her all this time, and leading her by His Spirit into the right way. She knelt down and prayed:

"Please, God, tell me what is that great thing which I must do, and don't let Jesus feel unhappy. You are a great God, and can do everything, and can You not tell me what to do, for I am naughty and am afraid You do not love me?"

A little child upon the hill-top, alone with God! Do you not think He heard her and came near to her? I do.

Louise had gone to God in the best way she knew how, and He helped her. When she arose, all her fears were gone, and she felt as if Jesus had come close to her, and that He had forgiven her. The little birds that had not ceased their evening song seemed to say to her: "God cares for us, but much more for you." Then a little verse came to her mind: "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Louise felt very happy, though she could not have told the reason why, had she been asked.

Before she entered the house she said to herself, "I wish I could kiss God. I wonder if I may not throw a kiss to Him." And so the poor little motherless one kissed her small hand, and waved it upward, and went into the house, saying to herself, "Our Father! If God is my Father I may kiss Him; I know I may."

Take note of this, dear child-reader. Louise had heard of God as a Father many times, but she never felt it before; now she did so, because God Himself had taught her by His Spirit.

She still thought there was some great thing for her to do, but felt easy about it now, because she believed God loved her now, and that He would by-and-by show her what to do. Louise had no one to talk with her about these things and to teach her. God knew this, and sent some one who could do so.

One thing which she did not know was, whether she ought always to go up that hill to pray. She had done so for several days, when a young cousin, whom she had never seen, came from the city to visit her. When the evening of the first day of her cousin's arrival drew near, Louise said: "Please excuse me, cousin Nelly, I must go to my praying-place." This led to inquiries, and the little girl told her cousin all that I have related to you, saying very earnestly, as she concluded: "Do, please, cousin Nelly, tell me what is that great thing which I must do?"

There were tears in cousin Nelly's eyes as she clasped the little one to her bosom and said, "My darling, do you not want to love Jesus?"

"Oh, I do love Him dearly! indeed, I do, now; although once I *did* not," was the artless reply.

"Then, dear little cousin, you have already done the great thing which God requires," was the reply, and the child's heart was relieved of its great burden.

WISE TIM.

Among the many beautiful and sensible children whom we see, there is, once in a while, an unfortunate one, who, from sickness or some other calamity, is not as sensible as others of his age. The heartless and cruel call such "fools" and "simpletons," and very often make sport of their weakness, thus offering an affront to high Heaven.

The Scotch have such a tenderness for this class of unfortunates as almost to amount to veneration; and some of the superstitious among them believe that the mind thus veiled from man enjoys clearer vision toward God and closer communion with Him than do those who can grasp all the thoughts and engage in all the pursuits of earth. They call them "innocents," instead of "fools," and in one of their nursery hymns, teaching the little ones tenderness toward them, are these touching lines—

"Oh, do not vex the witless,
They're God's peculiar care."

Poor Tim lived among the hills. He was what the boys called a "simpleton." He could never learn to read, to tell the time of day, nor to count more than ten. But he could obey his mother and teacher, and that is what many boys can't, or, rather, don't do. As the years went on, the other boys were promoted into higher classes, but Tim was always in the A B C class; always lifting the little ones into their seats, or tying their shoes, or taking them out into the entry for a drink of water from the bright tin dipper which hung over the pail. He was the patron as well as the companion of these little ones, who looked on his pockets as a storehouse of treasures, for there were nuts and chalk, shells and glass beads, broken dolls and barking dogs, and buttons and strings for whirligigs. All the broken toys in town were saved for this poor boy; and he could always find a hand or a leg of something to add to the strange stock in his pocket. Then his mother, although she was a hard-working woman, did all in her power to make the poor fellow happy, and used often to fashion penwipers, and windmills, and paper balloons for him to give away: for making presents was one of the chief joys of his innocent life.

Tim could not remember long messages, but if his mother or a

neighbour sent him to a shop for one thing, or with a written order for more, he ran, and neither looked to the right nor the left until his errand was accomplished. If a baby was entrusted to him in his little carriage, nothing could tempt him to leave it a moment on the roadside to go off to play; and sometimes he would borrow a baby for half a day, and amuse it with all the care of a tender nurse. He was faithful to his trust, whatever it was, and so truthful, that when there were conflicting stories told by other boys about any occurrence, an appeal to poor Tim always settled the matter in the minds of the mothers.

Tim would have been an efficient member of a society to protect animals and insects from cruelty, for he always had an eye for their interest and a hand for their defence. He also had most delicate and beautiful tastes for the works of nature. When very small he used to lie on the grass before the door and watch the simple flowers that bloomed in his mother's garden; and once a passer-by heard him talking to them in low tones, and patting them with his little hand, till, his full heart yearning to make a stronger impression of love, he bowed down over the pink bed and kissed the blossoms. His gentleness, obedience, and delicacy might have taught beautiful lessons to any who despised his weakness and smiled at his words.

As Tim grew older his weak mind fixed itself firmly on the truths of religion, but his creed was simple: "I love God and everybody." If all men could repeat it in sincerity, ours would be at once a new world wherein would dwell righteousness.

Tim was very regular in his attendance at church and Sunday-school, but it was hard to know just how much he understood or remembered of what he heard; but everybody believed that he knew and loved the Saviour.

One day his minister was surprised by his appearing in his study with traces of tears on his cheeks, for Tim rarely cried, even when a little child, however much he was hurt or disappointed.

"What has gone wrong with you, dear boy?" he asked, kindly.

"Don't be angry with me, sir," replied the poor fellow. "I never said it!"

"Never said what?" asked the minister.

"I never said there was no God, sir; I know there's a God, sir, and a Christ that loves me!"

"And who said you didn't?"

"The new boy at school. He called me a 'fool,' and fools are folks that say there is no God. I told him there was a God, but I was afraid he'd tell you that I said there was no God; but you'll believe me first, won't you, sir?"

"Tim, I'd believe your word as soon as I would the best man's in

town: and I shall tell this boy that you are not one of those fools who say that there is no God, and that he will not be allowed to call you harsh names in this town. There is a God, my dear boy; and I believe He is nearer to you than to many who think themselves very wise."

"I can't read, sir, nor I don't know how to make sums, but I know there is a God."

The minister explained as well as he could to the dull mind of Tim who the "fools" are that deny God, and comforted him by telling him that he was wiser in God's esteem and dearer to Him than many great and rich men. And he went away smiling for joy that he was poor Tim, rather than the fool who hath said in his heart "there is no God."

"STAND WHERE THE FIRE HAS BEEN!"

One time a party of travellers, with their guide, were traversing one of the vast prairies of the West. The day was exceedingly hot and sultry, and in the evening they were glad to encamp for rest and refreshment. So the waggons were wheeled up, to afford shelter and serve as a covering. The guide, however, seemed uneasy and restless, and sat upon his horse gazing intently at a far-distant object. The size slowly though surely increased, until a red tinge obscured the sky. The guide at once divined the cause: it was one of those awful fires which form the terror of both traveller and guide. Yes, the prairie was on fire! One vast sheet of flame came rolling along in every direction; the dry, half-scorched grass feeding and fanning the awful conflagration. Nothing was safe; man and beast, flowers, trees, and grass must be alike burned. The terrified beasts were rushing from the scene; the birds were flying with all the speed they could command. Is there no shelter for our travellers? Alas! none. Can they not save themselves by flight? No; the fire is gaining upon them. It comes rolling along, and unless some remedy is devised, some means of escape provided, they must perish.

But now the guide quickly calls upon the travellers to cease their efforts to get away. They cannot escape by flight. At once the guide strikes a light among the dry brushwood and tall grass, and another flame, fanned by the wind, almost instantly burns a space around the travellers, while the guide shouts aloud to the party, "Stand in the place where the fire has been!"

The command is at once obeyed; the waggons, horses, and baggage are at once removed to the still smouldering cleared space of ground, and the whole party are safe. But a few minutes longer

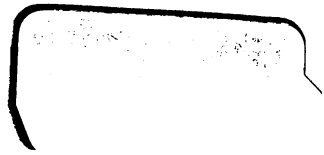
and all would have been consumed, but that charmed circle secures them. On rushes the fierce flame, but its fury is stayed where the travellers stood, for there is nothing to burn; all has been already consumed. The party are safe, for they stand in the place where the fire has been.

Reader, this is a picture of a sinner's danger—exposed to the flames of perdition, and of the foolishness of hoping to escape except by God's remedy. God has kindled a fire; it burned on the cross; it consumed the victim thoroughly. Even as the sin-offering of old was burned outside the camp, so Jesus suffered unto death. God's wrath and judgment, due to the sinner, fell upon Him. And now God is satisfied—perfectly so—with what Jesus has done and suffered. All is finished, and Christ is risen from the dead. No wrath for the sinner now believing on Jesus. And no wrath either for you, if Jesus and His love are believed in. Oh, stand in the place where the fire has been!

Where is that, do you say? Calvary is the place; there the fire burned. Christ has been made sin, but is now risen from the dead to die no more. Wrath unto the uttermost is coming quickly upon all the unbelieving. Come, then, to Christ to-day, and be saved.

Varieties.

WHAT WILL BECOME OF ME?—Thus exclaimed a poor woman, some time ago, who was just convinced of her lost state as a sinner. Her eyes were just opened, and she saw that she was justly condemned by God's holy law—exposed to His tremendous wrath, and excluded from happiness and peace. "What will become of me?" She felt that she deserved death, was exposed to it, and knew not how to escape from it. "What will become of me?" She feared hell, desired heaven, but knew not the way to it. Reader, have you ever made the discovery which this poor woman did? Have you ever felt as she did? Have you ever asked the question, "What will become of me?" If you die in your sins you must perish. But you need not perish. Go at once to the Lord Jesus, confess your sins, place your dependence on His precious blood, and look for eternal life through His merit and mercy. Have you done so? If you have, I will tell you what will become of you. When you die angels will receive you, a place in heaven will be appointed you, and glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life will be your endless portion.



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